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ABSTRACT

This report describes the experiences of successfully employed workers with visual impairments as they made the transition from college to work. It is based on interviews with 45 employees and 27 of their employers. The first chapter provides a literature review covering the importance of college, employer concerns, concerns of job applicants, the employment interview, and disclosing the visual impairment. The methodology of the study is then described. Direct quotations from the interviews are interspersed throughout the report. Employee interviews revealed that employees took an average of 7 months to obtain their job. Employees identified problems in the areas of transportation, money, accessing written materials, discrimination because of the visual impairment, accessing computers, managing time, and being lonely. Interviews with employers revealed that employers wanted to be informed about the visual impairment before or during the interview by the employee; the most frequent accommodations provided were travel instruction, computer access devices, alternative print media, flex-time scheduling, and removal of architectural barriers; and most employers were aware of the legal protections available to applicants and employees with disabilities. A checklist for employment was developed from the literature review and interviews. Appendices include letters and questionnaires used in the study. (Contains 31 references.) (DB)

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ED 391 319

Technical Report

Transition to Work Following Graduation from College:

Experiences of Employees with Visual Impairments and Their Employers

Lynn W. McBroom, Ph.D.

Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision

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June, 1995

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Transition to Work Following Graduation from College: Experiences of Employees with Visual Impairments and Their Employers

Technical Report

Lynn W. McBroom, Ph.D.

Introduction

There is no beginning and no end to transition. Transitions continue as long as life itself. The child makes the transition from home to school. The young adult continues the transition from school to work. This report is about the transition from college to employment for people with visual impairments.

This period of life can be very frustrating. For years, the young person has prepared, has anticipated the emancipation a paycheck brings, and has studied diligently to convince teachers of his or her mastery of the subject. Yet, jobs are hard to locate when the applicant is visually impaired. Some employers are not convinced that the person can do the job or will stay with the company long enough to make any extra training and accommodations worth the expenditure of time and money. But what young college graduates with visual impairments do have on their side is the growing number of successfully accommodated workers who are making significant contributions in their workplaces.

This report describes the experiences of successfully employed workers with visual impairments as they made the transition from college to work. Interviews were conducted with both employees and their employers to paint a fuller picture about experiences on the job. Direct quotations from employees and employers are included so readers can gain insight from the "experts" themselves.

Literature Review

> *You still have to hustle for the jobs you want because in these difficult times, especially, employers are not likely to come looking for you. Furthermore, employers are still going to hire the applicants they deem best qualified - disability or no disability* (McDonough, 1992).

Introduction

Employers miss out on a bonanza of workers when they ignore job applicants with visual impairments. Although they rank higher than sighted workers on a number of positive measures and most accommodations cost little or nothing to provide, in general, this group is unemployed, underemployed, and under utilized.

People with visual impairments are still not being hired in large numbers. Employers reported that the greatest barrier to hiring workers with impairments is the lack of qualified applicants (Brown, Joseph, & Wortruba, 1989; Ellner & Bender, 1980). In 1987, the Louis Harris Poll concurred with this finding and reported that employers rate a lack of qualified applicants as the single most important barrier to employment (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Handicaps [NICCYH], 1987). In addition, 38% of all job failures resulted from productivity problems, while 23% occurred due to social problems (Johnson, Warrington, & Mellberg, 1989).

According to a 1986 Louis Harris Poll, 66% of working-age unemployed people with disabilities wanted to work (Brown et al., 1989). This same poll showed that workers with impairments scored "good" or "excellent" on job performance ratings. Workers with impairments were described as hard working, reliable, punctual, and productive. They earned high attendance rates, desired promotions, and demonstrated leadership abilities. In a note of cautious optimism, 80% of department heads and managers who supervised employees with impairments, did not view them as being any more difficult to manage than nondisabled workers. In a more recent study, Mullholland (1994) found that the majority of employees with impairments rated average or above average on measures of safety, attendance, and quality of job performance. Another study found that workers with impairments sought no special privileges, tended to be more cautious than other workers because of awareness of their physical limitations, sometimes developed greater sensitivity in the remaining sense modalities through practice, and often required no special working arrangements (Ellner & Bender, 1980).

Hiring a worker with an impairment is no more expensive than hiring any other worker (NICCYH, 1987; Thompson, Bethea, & Satcher, 1994). In addition, Thompson et al. (1994) reported that half of the job accommodations cost nothing, while three fourths cost less than five hundred dollars.

Importance of College in the Transition to Work

For many people with visual impairments, college is the time when they prepare for work. In college, they learn skills and trades, develop friends, become self-reliant and independent, learn the value of meeting deadlines, and receive career counseling and job placement services. Ideally, students leave college prepared for work.

College students with visual impairments can grow dependent upon campus support services and may expect employers to provide the same supports. Colleges provide readers, notetakers, extra time, and personal care attendants; employers do not have the same obligations (Nathanson, Lambert, & Trachtenberg, 1986).

College students with visual impairments may not have experienced work or volunteer activities. A "blank" resume may lead employers to think that they have not developed "independent decision making skills; appropriate work-related behaviors; or meaningful relationships with colleagues, supervisors, or other potential role models" (Nathanson et al., 1986, p. 9). These same authors charge that "too many disabled graduates do not look, nor act, like college graduates" (p. 11). Instead they lack social skills, appropriate appearance, assertive demeanor, or effective communication skills.

In another study, Drier and Ciccone (1988) concluded that young people with poor early work experiences were less likely to gain favorable later work experiences unless they modified their skills, attitudes, or values. These authors believed that vocational education is the means to improving work readiness. Workers trained through vocational education were reported to be more productive on the job, require less on-the-job training, and earn higher wages than employees without such training. The authors also noted that holding a part-time job while in school did not adversely affect school behavior or performance. Today's college graduates probably did not participate in vocational education programs, although this will change in the future with the growth of the national "tech prep" program (McCullough, 1994).

The NICCYH (1987) compiled a list of suggestions for developing independence in young people who are beginning work. These suggestions are appropriate in both family and college settings.

1. Develop skills in personal care, hygiene and health, social interactions, use of money and time, telephone usage, cooking, and travel.
2. Learn how to complete tasks and not make excuses for behavior.
3. Participate in after-school employment and volunteer activities.
4. Locate positive role models in integrated community settings.
5. Network with business associates, friends, neighbors, relatives, employment agencies, and others to learn about employment opportunities. Johnson et al. (1989) reported that friends, family, business associates, and acquaintances are the most effective sources

for locating jobs.

6. Ask employers what they look for and expect from employees (e.g., skills, behaviors, attitudes).
7. Do not expect complete employer understanding or employers to be perfect.
8. Learn about job accommodations, support services, and SSI benefits.
9. Educate employers and front-line supervisors about relevant legislation and disability rights, job coaching, resources and supports, appropriate language, accommodations, and needs.
10. Become an advocate for improved services including contacting elected officials for support of proposals.
11. Enlist advocates from families or rehabilitation agencies when needed.
12. Investigate local labor unions and their eligibility requirements, apprenticeship programs, and support services.
13. Consider developing a business or working from home.
14. Avoid becoming part of a cluster of disabled people within the workplace; strive for natural proportions of employees.
15. Encourage employers to network with other business groups to share their experiences.

Employer Concerns

Some employers are hesitant to hire workers with impairments because they believe that firing them would be difficult, painful, or expensive (Johnson et al., 1989). They believe there will be problems on the job, they do not want to cause personal harm, and they do not want lawsuits brought against them.

Employers are more concerned about workers with mental, emotional, or communication disabilities than physical disabilities (Greenwood et al., 1988). Employers may believe that people with certain impairments have particular, linked personal attitudes and emotional characteristics. In other words, some employers resist placing people with impairments into certain jobs because they believe that undesirable personal attitudes and emotional characteristics go along with those particular impairments (Greenwood & Johnson, 1985).

Employers have a number of concerns when hiring someone for a job. These concerns may be based on their past experiences or their closely held perceptions about workers. The following is a list of some of the more common employer concerns as reported by Bhaerman and Spill (1988), Charner (1988), Condon (1987), DeMario (1992), Drier and Ciccone (1988), Greenwood and Johnson (1985), Hastings (1994), Mann and Harley (1986), NICCYH (1987), and Witt (1992). Employers evaluate applicants' general appearance and attitudes, personal hygiene, verbal and self-expression skills, physical and mental abilities, self-confidence, and personal and social skills. They assess the applicant's accuracy and neatness on the job application; previous work experience; academic

accomplishments; basic skills in reading, writing, and math; and extracurricular activities. They look for evidence of tardiness, absenteeism, or low effort on the last job, as well as a history of frequent job changes, quits, or layoffs. They want to know about applicants' work habits and performance speed, productivity, ability to follow instructions and make decisions, enthusiasm, drive, initiative, maturity, responsibility, ability to acknowledge mistakes, and supervisory requirements. During the interview, they try to garner clues about applicants' ability to get along with supervisors and coworkers, family support, interest in the job, goals and motivation, interest in security and benefits, salary demands and expectations, dependability, flexibility, stamina, and endurance. The employer tries to predict the future by guessing the ability of coworkers to work with someone with a visual impairment, the cost and reasonableness of accommodations, the person's capacity for advancement, leadership potential, and ultimate job satisfaction. Finally, employers look for workers who volunteer to learn new tasks, commit to the profession, demonstrate problem-solving abilities and creativity, expend superior effort, demonstrate initiative, appropriately ask for clarification and help, deal with the unexpected, work independently, and display loyalty to the company.

A job applicant needs to understand an employer's concerns and fears, be prepared to address those that are relevant, and quickly dismiss those that are not relevant. An employer may not understand an impairment and be afraid to ask, may believe that insurance rates will rise if the person is hired, may not know how to adapt a particular job to fit the person's abilities and disabilities, may have concerns about the person's transportation to work, may fear that it would be very difficult and expensive to fire the worker, may not know if other workers would be able to get along with this person and his/her special needs for accommodations, may have concerns about the person's ability to communicate, may anticipate work-related accidents, and may fear the worker's inability to cope in the face of a crisis or emergency. Bolles (1991) provides responses to each of these concerns.

Brown et al. (1989) listed strategies for avoiding or overcoming problems with workers with impairments. These recommendations refer to impairments in general and may not be relevant to employees with only a visual impairment.

1. Assign workers to appropriate job tasks. Make sure employees possess all prerequisite skills necessary for each job-related activity. Let workers demonstrate their levels of proficiency.
2. Examine your own tolerance levels and reactions to workers.
3. Act in ways that encourage employees to accept each other. Do not label employees in terms of disabilities. Make employees feel welcome.
4. Eliminate myths and fears, and focus on facts.
5. Include employees in decision-making processes. Demonstrate confidence in employees.
6. Orient the employee to the worksite (e.g., restrooms, lockers, equipment, supplies).

7. Establish "buddy" systems that pair able-bodied workers with workers who are disabled.
8. Make appropriate job accommodations, give appropriate support, and provide help when needed.
9. Be empathetic. Offer a friendly, supportive working relationship.
10. Be consistent in behavior, expectations, and standards.
11. Talk to individuals in private. Listen to what employees have to say.
12. Encourage and help employees to do their best. Help employees succeed.
13. Be concrete and specific.
14. Describe in advance your expectations of employees. Establish realistic goals.
15. Speak to employees as adults. Talk directly to employees and develop two-way communications. Do not talk to employees while doing something else at the same time. Do not interrupt employees to finish sentences for them. Do not be sarcastic.
16. A nod of agreement does not always indicate understanding; request specific responses.
17. Be aware of what you may be communicating indirectly.
18. Make sure the pace for training activities is neither too fast nor too slow. Introduce one new idea at a time and explain why things are done.

Brown et al. (1989) offered excellent advice to employees: Do not expect any more or any less from a worker with a visual impairment than from any other worker. Workers with visual impairments do not possess superhuman abilities and neither are they all failures.

Concerns of Job Applicants

Job applicants with visual impairments need to understand the work environment in order to match their skills, abilities, and personality with the demands of the workplace. Detailed knowledge of the company, the role of unions, and even the size of the company can all play a part in whether or not a particular business is a good place to work. Once job applicants become employees, they must become part of the social environment of the business in order to benefit from coworker support, informal channels of information, and possible future promotions.

Job applicants must do research on companies that offer possible job opportunities. Depending on the information received, the applicant may want to actively pursue employment with that company or may terminate the job inquiry. Witt (1992) prepared a list of questions for job applicants to consider:

1. Does the employer have a history of hiring and providing job accommodations for employees with impairments? Do they modify equipment, provide or allow supported employment, or restructure

jobs?

2. How many employees are there? Does the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have relevance for this company?
3. Is the business conveniently located and is it accessible? Where is the main office and other facilities? Is the commuting time feasible?
4. What are the policies about time schedules? When is the business open? Are the hours flexible? Are alternative work schedules available (e.g., part-time, job sharing, flex-time, time-limited projects, telecommuting)? Does the employer hire freelance workers or outside consultants?
5. Does the employer pay market-rate salaries?
6. Does the employer offer a full employee benefits package (e.g., vacation, sick leave, dental plan, eyecare plan, life insurance, disability, childcare program, bonus compensation program, profit-sharing, employee stock purchase, product discounts, retirement plan)? Do health insurance plans limit coverage on pre-existing conditions? Who pays the insurance premiums?
7. Does the employer provide and encourage on-the-job training? Are tuition and books reimbursed?
8. Does the employer promote from within the organization? In a family-owned business, are family members promoted before other employees?
9. Is the business in a growth or a shrinking industry? What advantages do the firm's products or services have over those offered by competitors? What is the firm's market share for the product, and is that market share growing? How much of the sales are exports? Are there new products that suggest impressive growth and subsequent opportunities for input?
10. What is the organization's financial outlook? Have there been major layoffs?
11. What does the business do or make or what services does it offer? What market does it serve?
12. What category is the employer in (e.g., profit, nonprofit, government, federal contractor, grant recipient)?
13. What are the organization's biggest problems and could you be useful in solving those problems?
14. What are the precise duties, required skills, and expected outcomes for an employee?

Just as job applicants convinced interviewers that they possessed the skills to perform the job, new employees must convince coworkers. New employees should focus on their strengths and abilities and not their disabilities (Law, 1992). Special equipment should be introduced as something that allows workers to perform their jobs rather than special favors or benefits that set them above other workers.

Young (1995) convened a focus group of successfully employed people with visual impairments to discuss employment issues. The members of the group agreed on the following recommendations: (a) Do not blame anybody else, (b) be passionate about work, (c) do not expect the world to be rearranged for you, (d) realize that blindness is only one characteristic of a person and not the entire person, (e) develop alternative skills, and (f) utilize role models and mentors who are visually impaired and be a role model to someone else.

Unions play a part in employment issues in many American companies. Traditionally, labor unions have not been supportive of people with disabilities because the union is responsible for the economic welfare of all of its members. Johnson et al. (1989) found that individuals with disabilities were perceived by unions as weakening the wage structures, less qualified than nondisabled workers, and not matching existing job classifications. This may be changing as several national unions (National Restaurant Association, AFL-CIO) develop policy statements addressing the employment of workers with disabilities.

Rehabilitation personnel make most placements in large companies even though small businesses employ the largest portion of the labor force (Johnson et al., 1989). Advantages of employment in a larger company include greater potential for upward mobility, improved fringe benefits, opportunities for employee development and training, and sensitivity to nondiscriminatory hiring practices. Advantages with a smaller company include individual attention, greater flexibility, and longer tenure.

Workers with impairments are not as likely to be promoted once they obtain a job (Law, 1992; McDonough, 1992). Workers must prove their competence at the entry level, volunteer for assignments with the potential for growth and advancement, and form social linkages within the workplace (Law, 1992). Hammitt (1992) asserts that while "educational accomplishments are essential to getting a job, social and communication skills will keep that position and ensure success in it" (p. 43). Through social networks, workers with impairments can learn how promotions are obtained within a particular company.

The Interview

During an interview, both the employer and the job applicant pass judgement on one another. Interviewers attempt to match applicants' skills and abilities with their businesses' needs, while applicants determine if they would like to work for this particular business. Beyond the usual considerations, an applicant with a visual impairment undergoes additional scrutiny. The interviewer wants to know about adaptations needed to perform the job and the cost of those adaptations to the company. More specifically, they want to know if the job candidate with the visual impairment can independently complete a job application, can maintain appropriate eye contact, and can function independently during the interview (Greenwood & Johnson, 1985).

Bolles (1985) divided employers into two groups:

> *those who would be put off by your handicap, and those who would not be at all put off by your handicap. Your job is to find the second kind of employer, and not pay any attention to the first.* (p. 180)

Job searches can be painful, and it may sound trite to tell the person to keep looking until a match is found. Unfortunately, that is exactly what must be done. At the same time, job applicants must remember that they have options under ADA legislation. They may simply shrug their shoulders and move on to more hospitable environments, they may choose to educate interviewers about appropriate and legal interviews, or they may pursue legal action against the company.

Minton (1992) encouraged job applicants to manage the communication process by briefly acknowledging the visual impairment and then concentrating on skills and abilities. Applicants may explain how they performed other jobs or tasks, they may ask a faculty advisor or rehabilitation counselor to testify to their abilities, or they may provide the interviewer with literature and a list of resources that substantiate their claims to the job. Applicants should thoroughly answer the interviewer's questions so there is no doubt about their ability to perform the job. Applicants must keep the discussion focused on their skills and not allow interviewers to dwell on the visual impairment or particular technological adaptations.

The visual impairment will be a topic during the interview, whether or not it is ever verbalized. The interviewer evaluates how an applicant would perform the job, how that person would fit in with the company, and what problems might arise from hiring someone with a visual impairment. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) (1981) advised applicants to briefly discuss the impairment in terms of how it will affect work performance:

> *Do not apologize for having it; do not defend yourself as if you have been attacked; do not behave as though you have special abilities to compensate for it; most important of all, you must not be uncomfortable discussing the disability. Although it is likely to put the interviewer at ease if you, the applicant, discuss the disability, it is important that you not spend the entire interview talking about it.* (p. 100)

Witt (1992) advised job seekers to talk about the impairment in specific job-related terms. For example, applicants should not say they are visually impaired, instead, they should state their need for large print materials.

If the interviewer asks about special arrangements needed to perform the job, those questions should be answered directly. Otherwise, only bring up the subject after everything else, especially skills and abilities, have been thoroughly discussed. If equipment or assistive devices are available from other sources (e.g., rehabilitation services), the employer should be told about those arrangements (NFB, 1981). Under ADA legislation, employers are only responsible for reasonable accommodations (McDonough, 1992). "Reasonableness" is affected by the nature, cost, and impact of accommodations; the resources and size of the

company; and the type of business operation affected (including composition, function, and structure of the workforce).

Thompson et al. (1994) made specific suggestions for job applicants with visual impairments during job interviews:

1. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer to indicate attentiveness. If eye contact cannot be maintained, briefly explain this fact and tell the interviewer that you are still listening. Alternatively, direct your face towards the voice of the interviewer.
2. Practice interview skills and nonverbal behavior with a business acquaintance who will provide critical feedback about nonverbal behavior (rocking motions, hand and head movements, and carriage).
3. Encourage a handshake by extending your arm.
4. Keep your hands resting in your lap or on the chair arms. Fold away your cane or place it by your side. Handling the cane during interviews is distracting and indicates nervousness.

Disclosure

Sooner or later, the question arises, "When do I disclose my visual impairment?". There is no clear-cut and easy answer to this question. "It depends," is the most accurate answer. That said, the literature provides some guidelines about disclosure.

First, applicants must determine if disclosure is even necessary. If the impairment is not visible, job performance is not affected, and no accommodations are needed, disclosure is not necessary (Witt, 1992). If the impairment causes the applicant to display behaviors that could be misinterpreted by the interviewer, disclosure should occur (Minton, 1992). All other situations probably require disclosure.

In general terms, applicants should disclose at the time and place that supports the objective of being hired (Witt, 1992). According to Rutherford, Merrier, and Parry (1993), employers favored direct disclosure during the employment interview. Early disclosure (e.g., cover letter) may be desirable when the applicant knows that the company seeks individuals with impairments or when the impairment meets a specific job responsibility. Applicants may decide to disclose before an interview, for example, when setting up the time and location of the meeting. This allows the interviewer time to produce materials in an accessible format. If the applicant believes that the interviewer prematurely excludes individuals with impairments, later disclosure may be the best choice. However, surprised interviewers who hold negative opinions about people with impairments may not conduct fair interviews.

Information about a visual impairment should not be included in a section on health. In fact, there is no need for any health information on most resumes. When references to the visual impairment are unavoidable (e.g., graduation from a school for the blind), NFB (1981) advised applicants to list other activities not

considered traditional for people with visual impairments. Significant gaps in work or education due to late onset of the visual impairment should be explained.

Huvelle, Budoff, and Arnholz (1994) interviewed long-term employees with disabilities to ask their opinions about disclosure. Most respondents preferred disclosing the visual impairment before the job interview because they openly accepted their physical impairments, they recognized the limitations of others and wanted to avoid unpleasant confrontations, they wanted to give interviewers a chance to overcome the surprise of interviewing someone with a visual impairment, and they wanted interviewers to have time to think about how someone with a visual impairment could perform the job. The authors recognized the limitations of this study; specifically, the responses reflected what workers think they would do in the future and what they think others should do now. Their answers do not necessarily reflect what they did in their initial job search.

Transition Guides

Thompson et al. (1994) developed an employment guide for college students with disabilities. The book contains plainly written materials on the ADA; adjustment to disabilities; disability disclosure; appearance and body language during job interviews; assessment of work abilities, interests, and values; application forms; cover letters and resumes; interview skills; job search plan; job leads; job retention; vocational rehabilitation services; benefits; facts about employees with disabilities; and additional resources.

Witt (1992) published another resource guide containing specific recommendations and suggestions for researching employers (including the names of additional reference books). She concluded her book with a chapter on interviewing "do's and don'ts," typical interview questions and possible responses, differences between screening and selection committees, and tips on managing disability issues. Typical questions that could be asked about the disability (or remain unanswered in the interviewer's mind) and possible responses are also discussed.

Richard Bolles published a number of books, including the continually revised *What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters & Career-Changers* (1985). A smaller publication which is particularly relevant to people with impairments, is Bolles' *Job-Hunting Tips for the So-Called Handicapped or People Who Have Disabilities* (1991).

Methodology

Background

This research project builds upon a recently completed, closely related project conducted by researchers at the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (RRTC). The stated purpose of that earlier project was to identify the skills, knowledge, and steps necessary for students with visual impairments to successfully make the transition from high school to postsecondary institutions (colleges). Results of this study can be found in the monograph by McBroom, Sikka, and Jones (1994), *The Transition to College for Students With Visual Impairments*. The current project takes transition one step further, by identifying the skills and knowledge necessary for people with visual impairments to successfully make the transition from college to the workplace. Three specific questions guided this research:

1. What do people with visual impairments need to know to begin work after graduating from college?
2. In moving from college to work, are the issues the same as for attending college?
3. What skills and knowledge do employers identify as important for their employees with visual impairments?

Procedures

The process of identifying respondents was slow and tedious. As the pool of potential respondents became smaller, the process of identification became more difficult. Out of all the high school graduates with visual impairments, a smaller number attended college, fewer graduated from college, and even fewer obtained jobs after graduating from college. Kirchner and Simon (1984) estimated that only 20,000 or 0.17% of the 12 million college students are students with visual impairments.

Permission to contact participants was obtained from Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board, from the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB), and from the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). These approvals were necessary because contacts were made with most respondents through state vocational rehabilitation agencies. State agencies were sent packets of information to disseminate to recent college graduates with visual impairments who were now working (within 2 or 3 years of graduation from college). Each packet contained an introductory letter (Appendix A) which provided information about the project and solicited the person's participation. People wishing to take part in the telephone interview, signed the consent form and returned it to the RRTC in the business reply envelope. In an attempt to improve the response rate, postcard reminders were later sent to directors of state agencies.

Introductory packets were also sent to colleges that had participated in the earlier transition study (McBroom et al., 1994). Most schools that provided feedback, indicated they did not keep up with their graduates or they could not determine who was visually impaired.

The respondents were not known to the researchers until they replied to the introductory letter and agreed to participate in the study. Although the researchers knew how many packets were sent from the RRTC, only a general estimation could be made about the number of packets actually distributed. Colleges and state agencies were asked to return a postcard indicating the number of packets mailed from their offices (and if they needed additional packets). According to postcard returns and telephone conversations, state agencies distributed 228 packets (51 state agencies were contacted), while colleges only distributed 16 packets (118 colleges were contacted). A response rate could not be accurately calculated because of confidentiality requirements protecting the potential respondents. The researchers do not know how many packets were actually sent out by agencies and schools, nor how many actually reached their intended destination. The unknown response rate is unfortunate from a research perspective. Because of the difficulty in identifying college students with visual impairments, this situation was unavoidable.

Telephone interviews were conducted from April to July, 1994 by a graduate student trained in interviewing techniques. A total of 55 interviews were completed, but 10 were eliminated from the analysis because they were unemployed (study targeted employed college graduates), they graduated from college more than 3 years ago (study targeted recent college graduates), or they were still enrolled in graduate school (study targeted workers no longer in college). General domains in the questionnaire included demographics, educational training, current job description, process of obtaining a job, and problem areas (Appendix B).

At the conclusion of the interview, respondents were asked if their employers could be contacted for an interview. Employees were assured that interviews would not be about specific employees or their work. Out of 45 employee interviews, 29 or 64% gave permission to contact their employers. Thirty-six percent refused the request (no inquires were made about the reasons for refusals).

Introductory letters were sent to employers requesting their participation in a telephone interview (Appendix C). Using one follow-up letter, 27 telephone interviews were completed with employers (93% response rate). These interviews were conducted by the project director. Employers were asked about their businesses, special services or adaptations provided to employees with visual impairments, preferences in interviewing applicants with visual impairments, and use of resources (Appendix D).

Neither group of respondents were paid for their participation. However, written results of the project were shared with anyone who was interested.

Small Number of Respondents Limits Conclusions

For a number of reasons, the number of respondents in this study was very small. Only a limited number of students with visual impairments enter college, and the number of college graduates is even smaller. When this restricted sampling universe is further limited to those who obtained jobs within 3 years of graduation, who could be located for interviews, and who were willing to be interviewed, the numbers are minuscule. Because of these restrictions, any conclusions drawn from this research are limited. They should be viewed as trends or directions for future research and not statistical absolutes. Despite these limitations, the information contained in this study is extremely valuable to people wanting to enter the job market. This research is unique because it draws upon the experiences of college graduates with visual impairments and their employers. This research is also important because it incorporates both statistical analyses and qualitative analysis. Readers can study the numbers and then read the words of the respondents. By incorporating both types of analyses, readers can better understand the problems and trials faced by employees and employers during the job search and subsequent employment period.

Results of Employee Survey

Employees were interviewed and asked about their demographic background, educational training, current job, process of obtaining a job, and problems associated with work. Questionnaire responses were analyzed using frequency analysis, correlation analysis, and limited factor analysis. Selected quotations from employees are included to highlight particular findings.

Demographics

Out of 45 employees, 51% were female and 49% were male. All but 2 respondents were White (96%). The respondents averaged 30 years in age with a range from 22 to 57 years. For comparison purposes, the earlier transition to college study showed the average age of college students with visual impairments to be 25 years with a range from 19 to 50 years (McBroom et al., 1994).

The average age when vision loss occurred was 10 years. The majority of respondents (56%) experienced their vision loss before the age of 10 and 38% had no vision at birth. The most frequently reported primary eye diagnoses were retinitis pigmentosa (22%) and other retinal dystrophies (i.e., Stargardt's Disease) (11%), followed by diabetic retinopathy (9%), congenital cataracts and lens anomalies (i.e., aniridia, coloboma) (9%), retrolental fibroplasia (7%), and optic atrophy (7%). Only 4 people (9%) reported any additional visual problems besides their primary diagnosis.

Seven employees (17%) were totally blind in both eyes, while 3 more (7%) only reported light perception. The remaining respondents' visual acuity ranged from 20/20 to 20/400 (all respondents were legally blind). When asked to describe their functional vision (from a list of possible answers), 22% reported "no useable vision," 18% had "vision useful for travel," 54% had "vision useful for reading, but cannot drive," and 7% reported "good vision for all activities".

Twelve people (27%) had an additional major health problem, the most common being diabetes (5 respondents). Almost two thirds (73%) had no other major health problems.

Educational Background

The overall grade point average (GPA) while in high school was 3.1 (with 4 representing an "A"). The college GPA was 3.3 (on the same 4-point scale). These two GPAs compare favorably to those reported by McBroom et al. (1994) in their study of college students with visual impairments.

Almost three quarters of the respondents (73%) were involved in extracurricular activities during college. In the McBroom et al. (1994) report, 67% of college students with visual impairments took part in extracurricular activities while in college.

Sixty percent of the employees earned a bachelor's degree, 36% completed a

master's degree, while 2 people (4%) finished a doctorate program. It took all respondents an average of 4.7 years to complete their bachelor's degree. Slightly less than half (47%) completed their bachelor's program in 4 years, the traditional time allocated to earning a bachelor's degree.

The leading college majors were education, biology, and social work (reported by 13% each), followed by business (11%) and rehabilitation (9%). Other areas of study were history, psychology, counseling, English, biology, communication, journalism, political science, computer science, arts, family science, and geography. These respondents represented a wide variety of college majors.

Employees were asked if their college education had trained them for the type of position they now hold. Sixty-nine percent replied "Yes," while 31% saw no relationship between their current job and their college training.

Reading Methods

Respondents were given a list of reading methods and asked to indicate all those methods which they used (they could use more than one method). Thirty-eight percent read regular print, while 56% read regular print with unspecified assistive devices. Large print was read by 36%, but only 20% read large print using unspecified assistive devices. One third of the respondents (33%) read braille, 67% used audiotapes, 40% utilized readers, and 47% depended upon computers with voice output technology.

Computer Usage at Work

A series of questions were asked about employees' use of computers at the worksite. The majority of respondents (84%) used computers in their work, but less than half of this group (17 people or 45%) had ever received job-related training on the computer. This indicates that the majority of employees who used computers at work, received their training before they began their job. McBroom et al. (1994) reported that 69% of the students with visual impairments used computers while in college.

Among the computer users who depended upon adaptations, 59% (17 people) used speech computer access and 31% (9 people) used large print computer access. The remaining 3 employees used a braille printer or embosser, a braille note-taking device, or a large monitor.

Work History

Three fourths of the employees (76%) had previous paid work experience before entering college, 60% worked while attending college, and 73% participated in volunteer activities while in college. The results were higher than those percentages found among college students with visual impairments (McBroom et

al., 1994). In that earlier study, 56% worked while attending college. In addition, 45% of the college students worked during high school, 64% worked during the summers of high school, 55% participated in volunteer activities while in high school, and 29% attended college after first working awhile. It is possible that the rates would be comparable if college students were requestioned shortly after college graduation. Some of the students with no work history at the time they were interviewed, may have later found employment before they graduated from college.

The employees held an average of 1.5 jobs since college graduation, however, the majority (58%) held only one job during this time period. Only 21% had ever received a job promotion, which is reflective of their short employment history. The average length of employment since college graduation was 15 months with a range from 1 to 36 months.

Current Employment

The employees were involved in a variety of types of work. The most common occupations were teacher of the visually impaired (11%), case worker (11%), and vocational rehabilitation counselor (9%). Other occupations included engineers, computer programmers, foresters, teachers, lawyers, accountants, social workers, and hotel workers. These jobs reflect the wide variety of abilities and training found among college graduates.

Almost everyone (91%) worked for someone else. Eighty-seven percent were employed full-time and worked an average of 40.4 hours per week (ranged from 10 to 70 hours per week).

Employees were asked about satisfaction with their current work. Over half (51%) were "very satisfied" and 33% were "somewhat satisfied". Nine percent were "equally satisfied and dissatisfied," while 7% were "somewhat dissatisfied". Taken all together, most respondents (84%) expressed some degree of satisfaction with their current work.

The average annual income was around $22,400. Thirteen percent earned less than $10,000 per year, while 38% earned around $24,500 each year (Table 1).

Table 1: Employees' Total Annual Income (N=45)

Midpoint Amounts	Frequency	Percent
5,499	6	13.3
14,500	12	26.7
24,500	17	37.8
34,500	7	15.6
44,500	2	4.4
54,500	1	2.2

Note: Since the question was phrased in terms of ranges, the midpoint was used to establish an exact amount for each category.

Locating Current Job

Length of time to locate job. An average of 6.5 months was required for respondents to locate their current job. Twenty-nine percent located their current job a month or less after college graduation.

Assistance in obtaining job. The majority of employees (62%) did not receive any help or assistance in finding their current job. Among respondents who did receive help, 41% (7 respondents) worked with rehabilitation agencies, 18% (3 respondents) consulted with teachers, 12% (2 respondents) contacted employment agencies, 12% (2 respondents) were helped by friends, and 18% (3 respondents) used other means such as job clubs and temporary agencies (Table 2).

Table 2: Assistance Received in Locating Current Job (N=45)

Assistance	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rehabilitation agency	7	15.6	41.2
Teacher	3	6.7	17.6
Employment agency	2	4.4	11.8
Friend	2	4.4	11.8
Other	3	6.7	17.6
Received no help	28	62.2	Missing

One third of the employees (33%) received some type of assistance in completing an application form, 51% filled out the form unaided, and 16% obtained jobs that did not require an application form.

Most respondents (84%) used resumes to obtain their current job. Within this group, 71% (27 respondents) obtained help or advice about writing their resume. Resume writing assistance was obtained from college teachers or college officials (52% or 14 respondents), family or friends (22% or 6 respondents), rehabilitation agency personnel (19% or 5 respondents), or contacts at work (7% or 2 respondents).

Disclosure timing. Four employees obtained their jobs without an interview, but the remaining group (65% or 26 respondents) disclosed the visual impairment before the first interview. The other 35% (14 respondents) disclosed the visual impairment during the interview process. Employees who took part in a job interview were asked if they would have done anything differently to inform an employer of their visual impairment. Most respondents (83% or 34 respondents) would have handled disclosure in the same manner, while 12% (5 respondents) would have withheld information and 5% (2 respondents) would have provided more information. One employee cautioned others, "Don't discuss [your visual impairment] unless it is necessary" and another person declared that he

should have waited until he was hired because "It was very aggravating". Other employees took the opposite tact: "I would have been more straightforward. Wish I had stood up for my rights more". One employee simply said, "Be upfront with them [employers]".

Knowledge of job openings. Employees learned about their jobs in a variety of ways. The most common avenues of information were advertisements (24%), friends (22%), college teachers (11%), vocational rehabilitation personnel (11%), and networking (11%). Four respondents (9%) developed their own jobs and 4 (9%) learned about jobs after sending resumes to various companies. Only 1 person obtained a job from a "head hunter" or employment service (Table 3).

Table 3: Method Used by Employees to Learn About Job Openings (N=45)

Methods	Frequency	Percent
Advertisement	11	24.4
Friend	10	22.2
College teacher	5	11.1
Vocational rehabilitation personnel	5	11.1
Networking	5	11.1
Developed own job	4	8.9
Sent resumes	4	8.9
"Head hunter" or employment agency	1	2.2

Ranking items according to importance. A series of statements were read to employees so they could rank the importance of each item in obtaining a job. Their answers ranged from 0 ("not important") to 4 ("very important"). For reporting purposes, the 17 items were grouped into three categories: (a) development activities, (b) discovery activities, and (c) other activities (Table 4).

Development activities included activities undertaken by most job-seekers (regardless of impairment) which helped them prepare for the job search and the job interview. Within this group, the most important items were "making a career choice" (average = 3.6), "developing a resume" (average = 3.4), and "communicating with other people about the type of job you would like to have" (average = 3.3). Of lesser importance was "practicing being interviewed" (average = 2.9) or "attending workshops or classes to develop job-seeking skills" (average = 2.3).

Discovery activities included activities relevant to a particular job site which allowed someone to become familiar with a new environment and allowed others to learn about the new employee's abilities and needs. The two most important items in this group were "locating transportation" (average = 3.4) and "communicating with the employer about needs associated with your visual impairment" (average = 3.1). Items of lesser importance included "visiting the job site" (average = 2.8), "making housing arrangements" (average = 2.7), "making

Table 4: Importance of Items in Obtaining a Job (in Descending Order According to Average Importance) (N = 45)

Items	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Important %	Quite Important %	Very Important %	$\bar{x}$ (SD)
Development activities						
Make a career choice	2.2	4.4	-	17.8	75.6	3.60 (.89)
Develop a resume	4.4	2.2	6.7	17.8	68.9	3.44 (1.04)
Communicate with others	4.4	-	13.3	28.9	53.3	3.27 (1.01)
Practice interviews	6.7	6.7	11.1	42.2	33.3	2.89 (1.15)
Learn job-seeking skills	17.5	10.0	25.0	25.0	22.5	2.25 (1.39)
Discovery activities						
Locate transportation	4.7	2.3	4.7	25.6	62.8	3.40 (1.03)
Communicate with employer	6.8	-	20.5	25.0	47.7	3.07 (1.15)
Visit job site	9.1	6.8	18.2	29.5	36.4	2.77 (1.27)
Make housing arrangements	17.5	-	17.5	27.5	37.5	2.68 (1.44)
Arrange for readers	25.3	5.9	20.6	23.5	26.5	2.24 (1.52)

(continued)

Table 4: (continued)

Items	Not Important %	Slightly Important %	Important %	Quite Important %	Very Important %	$\bar{x}$ (SD)
O&M in community	28.9	7.9	7.9	28.9	26.3	2.16 (1.62)
O&M at work	21.1	13.2	23.7	21.1	21.1	2.08 (1.44)
O&M at home	42.1	15.8	15.8	15.8	10.5	1.37 (1.44)
Other activities						
Vocational rehabilitation counselor	15.0	15.0	15.0	30.0	25.0	2.35 (1.41)
Learn to manage money	23.3	7.0	18.6	23.3	27.9	2.26 (1.53)
Participate in job club	33.3	9.1	36.4	15.2	6.1	1.52 (1.28)

arrangements for readers" (average = 2.2), "receiving orientation and mobility (O&M) instruction in the community" (average = 2.2), and "receiving O&M instruction at work" (average = 2.1). The least important item in this group was "receiving O&M instruction in your home" (average = 1.4).

The remaining items were grouped into an "other" category. "Working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor" had an average importance of 2.4. In a separate question, 82% of the employees indicated they were a vocational rehabilitation client at some point in their lives. "Learning how to manage your money" was of slightly less importance (average = 2.3), while "participating in a job club" was considered the least important activity (average = 1.5).

In addition, employees were asked to list anything else that was helpful in obtaining a job. Their answers stressed the importance of displaying a certain attitude or disposition in pursuing a job. One person said, "to have a lot of confidence and present it," while another asserted that job seekers should be "aggressive in [the] job search".

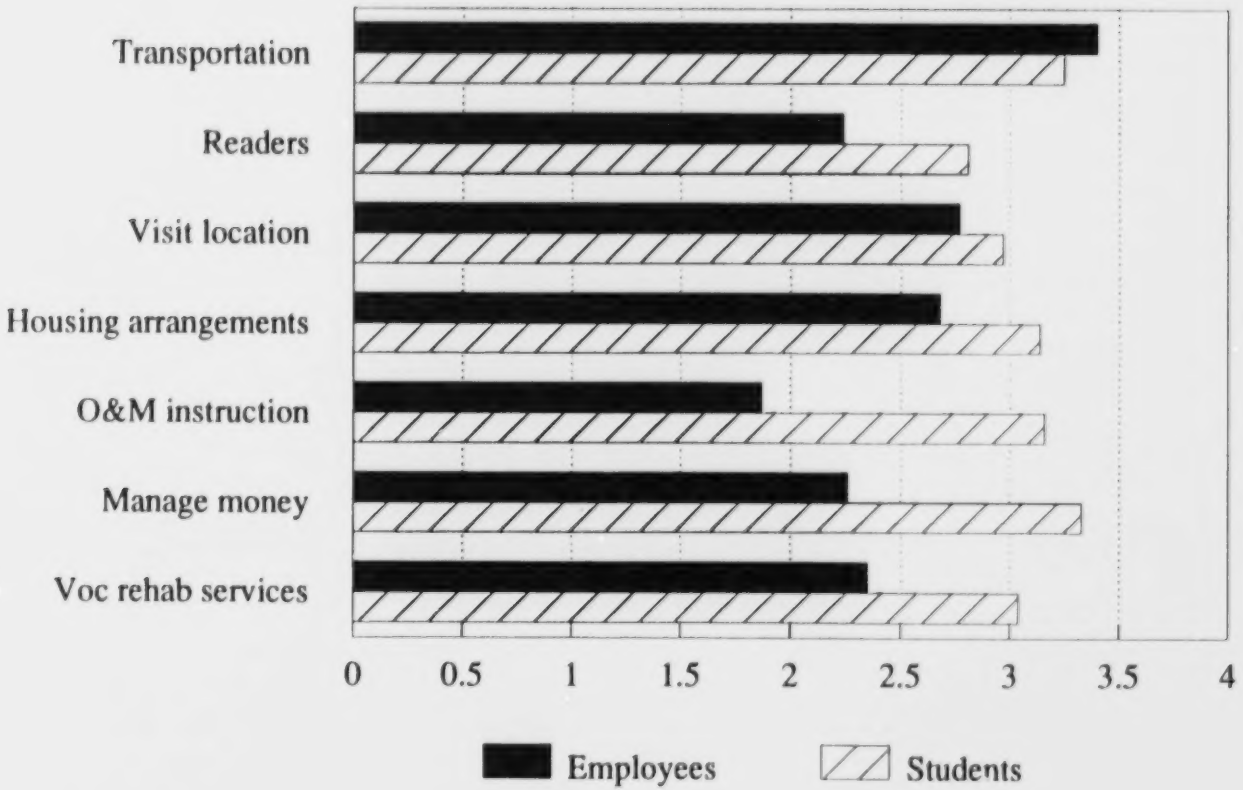
A few of these same items were used in the previous study of college students with visual impairments (McBroom et al., 1994). In that study, students ranked the importance of each item as it related to preparing for college. A comparison between the college students in the earlier study and employers in this study shows that a number of items decreased in importance for employees (Table 5 and Figure 1).

Table 5: Comparison of Importance of Items in Obtaining a Job (N=45) and Preparing for College (N=102)

Items	Employees $\bar{x}$	Students $\bar{x}$
Locate transportation	3.40	3.25
Arrange for readers vs. find and schedule readers	2.24	2.81
Visit job site vs. visit college during orientation	2.77	2.97
Make housing arrangements	2.68	3.14
Receive O&M instruction at work,	2.08	
in the community, and	2.16	
in the home vs.	1.37	
receive O&M instruction on campus		3.16
Learn to manage money	2.26	3.33
Work with vocational rehabilitation services	2.35	3.04

The only item given comparable importance by both students and employees was "locating transportation". The remaining items that can be compared across groups were all given a greater degree of importance by the college students

Figure 1: Importance of Items for Job and College



Reported by average

("making arrangements for readers;" "visiting the job site" vs. "visiting college during orientation;" "making housing arrangements;" "receiving O&M instruction at work, community, or home" vs. "receiving O&M instruction on campus;" "learning how to manage money;" and "working with vocational rehabilitation services"). It is possible that these activities become more familiar or even easier with the passage of time and through practice. Another possibility is that these items recede in importance as other items peculiar to the job site increase in importance.

Transportation and Mobility

The most frequent form of transportation used to get to work was private automobile (used by 42% of the employees) followed by bus or tram systems (36%). The other forms of transportation were walking (11%), handilift or specialized vehicles for persons with disabilities (4%), and taxis or bicycles (2% each).

Slightly less than half of the employees used a sighted guide (47%) or white cane (44%). One quarter of the respondents (24%) worked with dog guides and 13% relied upon low vision aids.

Problems at Work

Employees were presented a list of 26 work-related problems and asked if they had experienced any of them. Their answers were grouped into five categories: (a) assistive devices and reading medium, (b) mobility, (c) independent living, (d) social activities, and (e) other problems (Table 6).

In the category of assistive devices and reading medium, 36% of the employees had problems accessing books and written materials, and 37% had problems accessing diagrams and charts. Less than one third (30%) had problems accessing computers. Twenty-nine percent had problems managing their time, while 21% had problems completing tasks within time limits. Sixteen percent had difficulty writing reports, while 15% had problems locating appropriate assistive devices.

Only one mobility item caused any difficulty for the respondents; 29% of the employees had problems participating in recreational or athletic activities. Just 16% had problems with architectural barriers and merely 4% had problems with finding their way around the worksite. It appears that once employees become familiar with their work environment, they are able to maneuver around barriers with little difficulty.

In the category of independent living, almost half of the employees (47%) experienced problems with locating transportation. Reliable, affordable, and flexible transportation is still not available for a significant number of people with visual impairments. "Locating suitable housing" was a problem for 21% and "living independently" was a problem for 10%.

The fourth category included problems with social activities and interactions

Table 6: Problems Encountered by Employees at Work (in Descending Order) (N = 45)

Problems	$\bar{x}$	SD
Assistive devices and reading medium		
Accessing books and written materials	.36	(.49)
Accessing diagrams and charts	.37	(.49)
Accessing computers	.30	(.46)
Managing time	.29	(.46)
Completing tasks with time limits	.21	(.41)
Writing reports	.16	(.37)
Locating assistive devices	.15	(.36)
Mobility		
Participating in recreational or athletic activities	.29	(.46)
Architectural barriers	.16	(.37)
Finding way around worksite	.04	(.21)
Independent living		
Locating transportation	.47	(.51)
Locating suitable housing	.21	(.42)
Living independently	.10	(.30)
Social activities		
Being lonely	.29	(.46)
Making friends	.20	(.41)
Being accepted	.18	(.39)
Dealing with employees	.18	(.39)
Receiving good work evaluations	.07	(.25)
Other problems		
Having enough money	.47	(.51)
Managing money	.09	(.29)
Being discriminated against	.36	(.49)
Experiencing social pressures	.27	(.45)
Finding and scheduling readers	.23	(.43)
Obtaining special services for disability	.21	(.42)
Dealing with employers	.21	(.41)

with others. Twenty-nine percent of the employees were lonely, 20% had problems making friends, 18% had difficulty being accepted, and 18% had problems dealing with other employees. Only 7% had problems receiving good evaluations about their work.

The biggest problem identified in the last "catch-all" category was "having enough money," a problem for 47% of the employees. In a related area, only 9% could not manage their money. It appears that the respondents believed that they managed their money well; they simply did not have enough of it to manage. Thirty-six percent believed they had been discriminated against because of their visual impairment. Twenty-seven percent experienced social pressures, 23% had problems finding and scheduling readers, 21% had difficulty obtaining special services for their impairments, and 21% had problems dealing with their employers.

Most of these problem areas were similar to those reported in the study of students with visual impairments who were transitioning to college (McBroom et al., 1994). The two samples are not alike. However, a comparison between the two groups (college students with visual impairments vs. recent college graduates with visual impairments who are now working) showed that a number of the transition concerns are the same for both samples. Ten problem areas had similar effects on both groups (Table 7 and Figures 2a and 2b). Both samples had significant difficulty obtaining enough money, but both groups had no problems managing the money they possessed. Locating transportation was a problem for almost half of the respondents in both samples. Approximately one third of the respondents in both samples had problems accessing computers, being lonely, experiencing social pressures, and finding and scheduling readers. About one fourth of the respondents in both samples had problems being accepted, making friends, and locating suitable housing.

In three areas, approximately half of the students identified with a particular problem, while these same items were a problem for only one third of the employees (McBroom et al., 1994). These areas were accessing books and written materials, accessing diagrams and charts, and managing time. The variety of college courses taken by students requires them to rapidly and regularly obtain access to different forms of written materials. It is possible that employment either does not require the same access to written materials or that the variety and quantity of written work-related materials is significantly reduced. If an employee ever obtains accessible forms of reading materials, these can be used until they become outdated rather than just for the one school semester.

Four areas were problems for a third or more of the students, but a fewer percentage of the employees (McBroom et al., 1994). Completing tasks vs. completing exams with time limits, obtaining special services for impairments, participating in recreational or athletic activities, and finding way around worksite vs. campus, decreased in importance for employees (almost no employee had problems with mobility at the worksite). Obtaining special services may occur

Table 7: Comparison of Problems at Work (N=45) and at College (N=102)

Items	% of "Yes" Responses	
	Employees	Students
Having enough money	46.7	49.0
Managing money	9.1	11.8
Locating transportation	46.7	44.1
Accessing computers	29.5	36.3
Being lonely	28.9	28.4
Experiencing social pressures	26.7	31.4
Finding and scheduling readers	23.3	28.4
Being accepted	17.8	22.8
Making friends	20.0	23.5
Locating suitable housing	21.4	20.6
Accessing books and written materials	36.4	52.9
Accessing diagrams and charts	36.6	53.9
Managing time	28.9	53.9
Completing tasks with time limits vs. completing exams with time limits	20.5	37.3
Obtaining special services for disability	21.4	35.3
Participating in recreational or athletic activities	28.6	38.2
Finding way around worksite vs. around campus	4.4	39.2
Writing reports vs. papers	15.6	26.5
Receiving good work evaluations vs. making good grades	6.7	26.5
Living independently	9.5	18.6

only a limited number of times in someone's life; when the service has been successfully obtained, it becomes less of a problem. Employees may be less interested than students in participating in recreational or athletic activities. Attending college requires a student to move between multiple classrooms and buildings (library, dormitory, cafeteria, professors' offices, etc.), while employees tend to be confined to smaller geographical areas. College tends to be a more all-encompassing environment, while work only consumes a portion of a person's time.

Figure 2a: Problems at Work and College
% With "Yes" Response

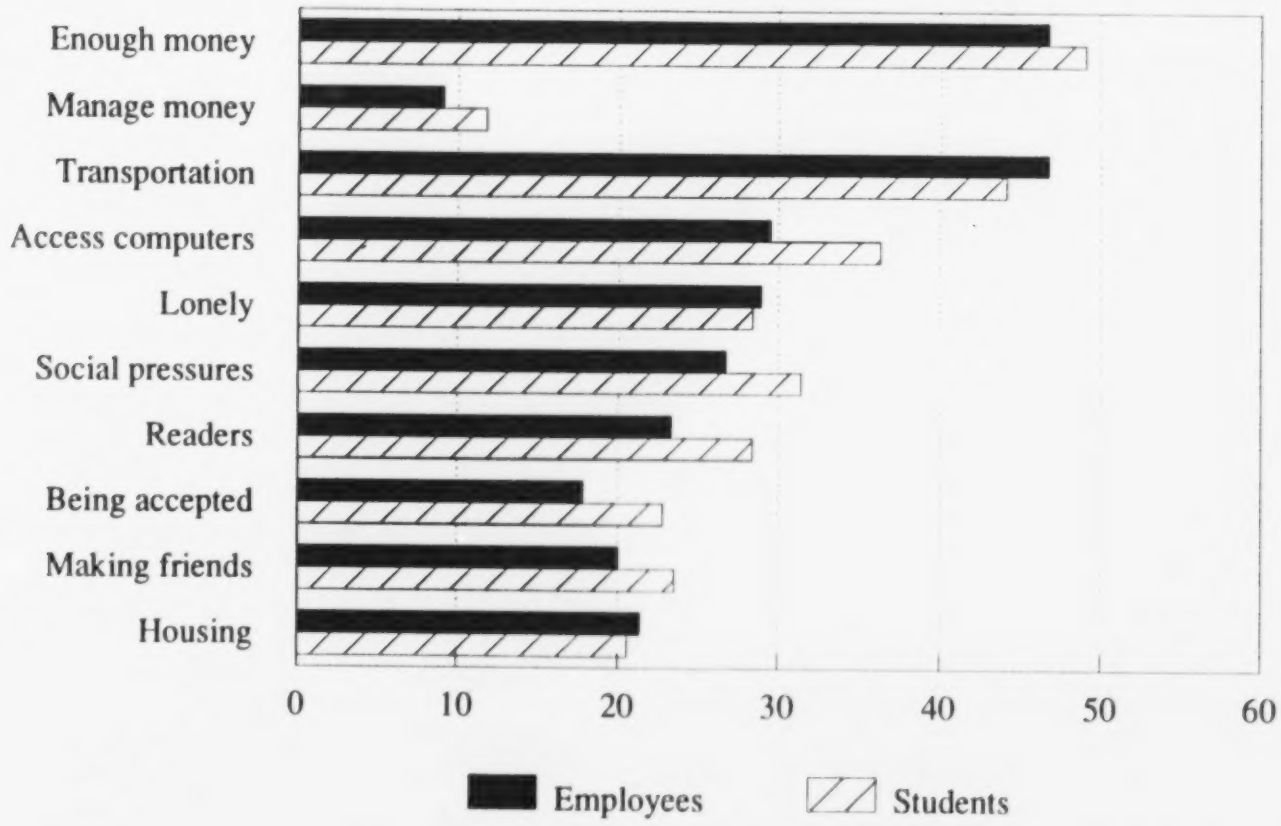
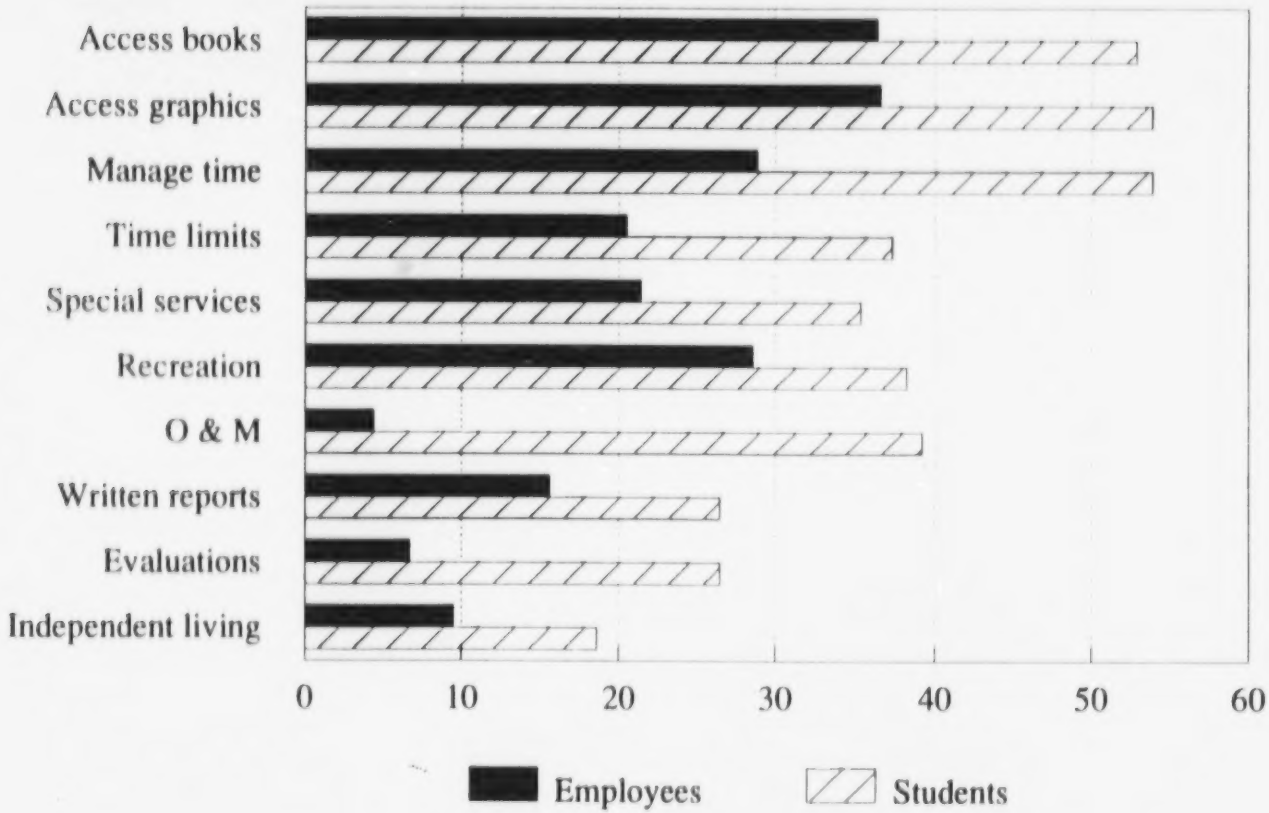


Figure 2b: Problems at Work and College
% with "Yes" Response



Roughly, one quarter of the students had problems writing papers, making good grades, and living independently (McBroom et al., 1994). Only one tenth of the employees reported problems with writing reports or living independently, while almost no employee identified problems with receiving good evaluations about their work. Employees may have become more proficient in these areas as compared to students.

Advice to Students

At the conclusion of the survey, employees were asked their advice for students with visual impairments who wanted to work after graduation. The interviewer asked two questions: "What do you know now about work that you wish you had known when you were attending college?" and "What advice would you give to a high school or college student with a visual impairment about work?".

Advice to students while still in college. Responses to the first question were grouped into five categories. In the first category, more than one fifth of the employees found that work was harder or more stressful than they had imagined. They missed the less stressful demands of college life. In comparison to college, job demands were much greater.

> *Wish I was still in college. Wish I would have known that it was as time demanding as it is.*
>
> *[Wish I had known] that it [work] is more responsibility than you think. Teaching is tough (emotional roller coaster).*
>
> *[I] should have stayed in college; it is easier in college.*

One fifth of the employees listed additional skills needed for improved job performance. Respondents in this category believed they lacked certain skills, had not completely mastered needed skills, or had been unaware of the importance of particular skills.

> *[Since I am] working in [the] mental health field, [I] should have studied more of therapy modes.*
>
> *[Wish I had] more of a business understanding.*
>
> *Employers are more interested in specialized skills.*
>
> *[Wish I had better] communications skills.*

One tenth of the employees wanted to know more about accessibility, especially for computers and transportation. They also needed to know what support was available from employers and state agencies to purchase accessibility devices.

> *[Wish I had known] how important a computer is for visually impaired people.*
>
> *[Wish I had been] more prepared for [the] real world, especially transportation.*
>
> *[Wish I had known about] adaptive technology.*
>
> *[Wish I had known about the] equipment available. Wished I had insisted on more money to buy equipment from [the] state [agency].*

Four employees regretted not knowing more about their vocational options. They believed that there were greater opportunities for them if they could just locate those elusive jobs.

> *[Wish I had known about] vocational options for [people who are] visually impaired.*
>
> *[Wish I had known that I] didn't have to fit into someone else's job title.*

Another 4 employees discovered that college was not adequate preparation for work. What they learned in college was vastly different from what they used on the job.

> *[Wish I had known] the fact that I would use the skills I learned in college so little.*
>
> *It [work] is not as ideal as college makes it out to be.*

Advice to students about working. Employees were then asked to give advice to high school or college students with visual impairments who wanted to work. Their answers were grouped into six categories. First, almost one fourth of the employees encouraged students to follow their dreams regardless of their visual limitations. They knew how discouraging other people could be.

> *Don't let [your] handicap get in the way. Start achieving your goals. Don't listen to criticism.*
>
> *Don't give up hope. You will eventually find a job in what you want to do.*

Where there's a will, there's a way. Persevere. Keep trying. Don't quit. Have patience. [You] will have to be better than sighted peers.

In this same category, employees also advised students to know and to understand their visual limitations and to make informed decisions about their abilities.

Be keenly aware of [your] abilities and limitations. Be honest and forthright about that. Accept [your] limitations (know this in advance).

Have a good resume. Be confident. Know your limitations and know what you can do about it.

Consider your limitations and be realistic.

More than one fifth of the employees told students to prepare for work by studying, by networking, and by understanding themselves. Graduates will be better prepared for work if they have completed these tasks.

Study hard. Not only are you competing as a handicapped person, you are also [competing] against nonhandicapped [people]. Be yourself.

Talk to people in [the] field so you know what [the] job entails and know how it would involve you.

Be ready for [the] real world. Networking is important.

Get out and meet people. Study [your]self and [your] interests.

One fifth of the employees told students to develop their skills in preparation for future work.

[Students should] develop as many independent skills as you can (e.g., mobility, braille, work with readers). Be as versatile as you can in accessing information. Don't expect to find [the] perfect job.

Bust your butt! Work as hard as you can and gain all the skills you can.

Find out what you want to do, how you are going to do it [and] then do it. Go into [a] job knowing how to do [the] job and be able to show [how to do it].

One sixth of the employees stressed the importance of determining what accommodations work best for them and how those accommodations could be obtained. The person may choose to discuss needs with employers or go ahead and make arrangements without additional assistance.

> *Be open and honest about [your] disability and communicate with employers about what you need to accommodate your needs.*
>
> *Go into it [work] with confidence. Ask for what you need (don't demand it). Be flexible. Be open minded and adaptable.*
>
> *Make sure you get all [the] aids needed to be able to do the job the best possible [way].*

Some employees (one tenth) warned others about the discrimination they may face on the job. They may encounter intentional discrimination, discrimination arising from ignorance, or discrimination disguised as helpful advice.

> *[I] would have researched if it was discrimination or not; in obtaining a job.*
>
> *Go for [the] job that makes [the] most money. Employers must be taught [by the employee] how to act with people who have disabilities.*
>
> *Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it. It is a crock!*
>
> *Be resourceful and don't let other people tell you, "No".*

Obtaining work experience while still in school is important when graduates are seriously job hunting (mentioned by 3 people). They know that employers look for work experience when evaluating a candidate for a job.

> *Study hard, get as much education as possible, and try to get work experience.*
>
> *Obtain as much experience as possible (summer work, etc.).*

Results of Employer Survey

Employers were interviewed and asked about their businesses, special services or adaptations provided to employees with visual impairments, preferences in interviewing applicants with visual impairments, and use of resources. Questionnaire responses were analyzed using frequency analysis and correlation analysis. Selected quotations from employers are included to highlight particular findings.

Demographics

Twenty-nine employees or 64% gave permission to contact their employers. Twenty-seven out of the 29 employers were interviewed (93% response rate). While 51% of the employees were female, the majority of employers were male (63%).

Businesses were classified by size according to their number of workers. Fifty-six percent of the businesses employed less than 100 people and were classified as small businesses, 26% were medium-sized (employed from 100 to 400 employees), and 19% were large (from 800 to 80,000 employees). One third of the worksites employed 35 or fewer employees; the median or midway point was 85 employees.

Forty-eight percent were public entities, 22% were private businesses, and 30% were private-nonprofit concerns. The majority of the companies (63%) were classified as public administration (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, Bernan Press, 1991). Smaller industry groups in this survey included manufacturing (11%), service (11%), agriculture (7%), and finance (7%).

The majority of businesses did not have any union members (63%). Among the 37% with union membership, none of the employers believed that the union had any influence (either negative or positive) on hiring a person with a visual impairment.

Interviews with Job Applicants

Employers were asked a series of questions about their preferences for interviewing job applicants with visual impairments. These questions were not designed to elicit ADA-sensitive responses, nor were they written to test employers knowledge of the newly enacted ADA. They were simply written to help determine how an employer would wish to proceed in an interviewing situation, regardless of legal constraints. In a couple of cases when the ADA was raised by the employer, the interviewer offered assurances that these questions were not legal traps or tests.

Disclosure timing. Employers were first asked when they wanted to know about a job applicant's visual impairment. Thirty-nine percent wanted to know during the interview; 35% wanted to know before the interview; and 15% wanted

to know after the interview, but before the job offer. Eight percent preferred to find out about the visual impairment through an introductory letter.

Additional comments were offered by several employers to explain their answers. Three employers actively sought to hire qualified employees with disabilities. When they could identify someone with an impairment, they even gave preference in hiring. One employer stated that if he could find an employee with a disability, he could forego additional interviews with nondisabled applicants. Four other employers wanted to know about a visual impairment early in the application process to have time to provide materials in an accessible format. Early disclosure to any of these companies would increase an applicant's chance of being hired.

Three employers admitted that they could be biased against someone with a visual impairment. They opted for later disclosure so they would not prematurely eliminate the applicant from consideration. Job applicants in these situations would increase their chances for being hired if they waited to disclose their visual impairment.

> *If they put it on paper, I might be less likely to call them in for an interview. This job requires a lot of paperwork and I might subconsciously mark them lower on ability.*
>
> *I hope disability would not affect my hiring decisions. However, I know I have answered these questions from my intellect and I realize that subconsciously, I might be affected by factors [such as a disability].*

Direct contact vs. mediator. The majority of employers (61%) wanted to be approached directly by the job applicant rather than indirectly through a rehabilitation professional (4%). Either approach was acceptable to 35% of the employers. Based on several comments, it is the interviewer's impression that only a few employers have ever been approached by a vocational rehabilitation representative about hiring a disabled worker.

> *It depends on the situation. If someone needed advocacy, I would appreciate contact from a rehabilitation professional.*
>
> *Follow-up contact with [an] agency is helpful. At a later time, let us know how to accommodate the person.*

Method used to complete job applications. Employers were asked how they would prefer a job applicant with a visual impairment to complete a job application. Almost three fourths of the group (74% or 17 people) did not prefer any particular method. According to one respondent, "just get the information". Twenty-two percent (5 respondents) wanted the applicant to complete the form at home and return it at a later time. An employer observed, "no one can accurately fill out a form in a waiting room". Only 1 employer wanted the person to complete

the job application without any assistance.

Employers were next asked how they would rate a person with a visual impairment who had received assistance in reading and filling out a job application. Eleven percent (2 employers) rated that person more favorably, 11% rated the person less favorably, and 5% (1 employer) rated the person much less favorably. Employers were mainly concerned about how the applicant would manage to read and produce printed materials, "If they received assistance, I would question their ability to do a paperwork job". Three fourths of the employers (74% or 14 people) did not care if the job applicant had received assistance.

> *If they need this to do the job, we will accommodate them. We are looking for someone with intellectual ability. We will accommodate them in every way possible.*
>
> *It depends on how the person got assistance in reading and filling out a job application. If they needed assistance and didn't ask, I would rate them lower. [I would rate them] higher if they needed assistance and went ahead and asked for it.*

Use of sighted guides. The use of sighted guides was presented in two scenarios to employers. In the first question, employers were asked how they would rate someone with a visual impairment who was accompanied by a sighted guide to the job interview. In this scenario, the sighted guide was not present during the actual job interview. Fifteen percent (4 employers) rated this person more favorably, and 69% (18 employers) were unaffected by the sighted guide. Eleven percent (3 employers) rated the situation less favorably, while 4% (1 employer) rated the situation much less favorably. One employer stated that using a sighted guide "showed initiative in getting accommodations". Two employers expressed their concerns about the job applicant's need for a sighted guide once he or she was on the job. They wanted to know if the applicant could function independently once employed.

Employers were also presented with the scenario where the sighted guide accompanied the job applicant into the job interview. Only 1 person (4%) rated this job applicant more favorably. Twenty-nine percent (7 employers) stated that the presence of a sighted guide would not affect their appraisal of a job applicant. Thirty-eight percent (9 employers) were less favorably impressed, while 29% (7 employers) were much less favorably impressed.

> *This would be distracting. This would not be needed, however it would be allowed.*
>
> *I would wonder about their confidence.*
>
> *This would not be necessary or applicable. They need a guide, not a translator.*

In general, employers were either unaffected or favorably impressed when a sighted guide went with the applicant to the interview site. Employers were suspicious when the sighted guide went into the interview itself. This was viewed as inappropriate behavior.

Importance of eye contact. Employers were asked to rate the importance of eye contact during interviews. When an applicant made inappropriate eye contact, 84% (21 employers) were unaffected in their evaluations. Several employers indicated that they had "gotten used to this," although they would have judged it differently before they knew about visual impairments. More employers explained that if the job applicant had told them about the visual impairment, they would not be judged harshly; however, if they had not disclosed their impairment, they would be judged negatively. One person responded, "I have difficulty with that initially, but once I know they had a visual impairment, it would be okay. I would really like to know about a visual impairment". Another 16% (4 employers) were less favorably impressed under any circumstances.

> *I would appreciate facial contacts. These are social work jobs and [they] need to have somewhat appropriate facial and body movements.*

> *Prior to [my] experience with blind people, I would not have expected them to make eye contact. Now I do expect this.*

Interviewers expect eye contact and tend to judge applicants harshly when eye contact is not make. If applicants choose not to disclose a visual impairment during an interview, they must know that they are making appropriate eye contact. If appropriate eye contact is not possible, the applicant should disclose the disability early in the interview.

Use of dog guides. In general, job applicants were rated more favorably when dog guides were present. One person (4%) was much more favorably impressed, 23% (6 people) were more favorably impressed, and 73% (19 employers) were not affected by the presence of a dog guide during the interview. While sighted guides were a cause for concern for some employers, almost everyone was either favorably impressed or unaffected by a job applicant's use of a dog guide.

> *Using a dog guide demonstrates independence and shows [that] the employee could get to and from work.*

> *[Dog guides are] less distracting than a sighted guide.*

Accommodations

Use of accommodations. The interviewer read a list of workplace accommodations that were used to help people with visual impairments do their jobs. Employers were also asked to list additional accommodations provided by their own particular companies. Employers provided an average of seven accommodations with a range from 3 to a high of 12 accommodations. Crosstab

analysis showed that the smallest businesses provide the greatest number of accommodations. Eighty percent of the smallest businesses provide 7 to 12 accommodations as compared to 43% of the medium-sized businesses and 20% of the largest businesses.

Almost everyone (92% or 24 employers) provided special travel instruction or orientation to the worksite. Eighty-five percent (23 employers) purchased computer access devices or CCTVs; 78% (21 employers) made print available in alternative formats (e.g., tape recording, braille, large print); 69% (18 employers) reassigned some job duties; and 62% (16 employers) provided readers. Fifty-two percent (14 employers) provided transportation, 52% (14 employers) allowed flex-time scheduling, and 50% (13 employers) removed architectural barriers. One third of the employers (33% or 9 people) offered part-time employment, 30% (8 employers) scheduled extra breaks and rest periods, and 26% (7 employers) assigned private office space (Table 8).

Table 8: Accommodations Provided by Employers for Their Employees with Visual Disabilities (N=27)

Accommodations	Percent Providing Accommodation (N)	SD
Travel instruction or orientation to worksite	92.3 (24)	.27
Computer access devices or CCTVs	85.2 (23)	.36
Print in alternative formats	77.8 (21)	.42
Reassigned job duties	69.2 (18)	.47
Readers	61.5 (16)	.50
Transportation	51.9 (14)	.51
Flex-time scheduling	51.9 (14)	.51
Architectural barriers	50.0 (13)	.51
Part-time employment	33.3 (9)	.48
Extra breaks and rest periods	29.6 (8)	.47
Private office space	25.9 (7)	.45

Several employers provided private office space or transportation for all employees. In these cases, no designation was used to indicate that accommodations were provided specifically for employees with impairments. A number of employers also made available part-time employment or flex-time scheduling for all employees. Again, these respondents were grouped with worksites that did not have specific accommodations for someone with a visual impairment.

Additional accommodations were suggested by several employers. Three employers (12%) provided training to other employees to accommodate a disability. Staff training included sensitivity training, information on particular impairments, methods of interactions, and methods of providing accommodations for a visual impairment. Additional training was provided to individuals with impairments by 23% or 6 employers. These employees were provided with a flexible learning curve to accommodate the longer time needed to read materials and learn tasks, extra assistance with client contacts and site reviews, access to vendors for technical support, and training on computers and equipment.

Specific accommodations were made for dog guides by 8% or 2 employers (purchase dog bed, make space available for the dog, additional pesticide services); telephones or calculators were provided by 12% or 3 employers; and dictating services were provided by 8% or 2 employers. Two employers (8%) allowed time-off with pay for medical treatment and to meet an early bus. Nineteen percent (5 employers) made environmental changes such as organizing teams, encouraging flexibility in response to problems, declaring a moratorium on rearranging furniture, and installing locks on offices to secure adapted computer equipment.

Resources for accommodations. Employers were asked to identify individuals or groups that provided needed help and advice in making accommodations for employees with visual impairments. The employers asked an average of two people or organizations for assistance (range from one to four individuals or organizations). The majority of employers (59%) asked the employee for advice. Another 30% talked to support personnel (medical administrator, personnel office) and 7% consulted coworkers. Fifty-two percent contacted the state rehabilitation agency and 15% called the private rehabilitation agency. Fifteen percent hired a consultant or engineer; 7% contacted the Job Accommodations Network (JAN); 11% talked to school or university personnel (including guide dog schools); and 11% sought help from additional sources (chamber of commerce, equipment salesperson, blindness consumer organizations).

Almost half of the employers (46% or 11 employers) used vocational rehabilitation agencies to help place a person with a visual impairment in their business. Only 13% (3 employers) used private rehabilitation for this purpose. Several employers indicated that they had contacted private and public rehabilitation agencies for reasons other than placement.

The vast majority of employers (81% or 21 employers) provided some type of training and information to their employees about working with someone with a visual impairment. Many times, this training was informal and on an "as-needed" basis.

> *Other employees were given informal training about her impairment and special equipment. They were told to accommodate her without embarrassing her. They were told that they were responsible for providing her with materials that she could access.*

Employer's Advice

Advice to college students. Employers were asked a series of questions about advice they would give to employees and to other employers. They were first asked, "What advice would you give to a blind college student who wanted to work after graduating from college?". Two fifths of the employers stressed that job applicants should not expect special considerations for their visual impairments beyond job accommodations. Employers sought workers who could perform job duties despite a particular impairment.

> *Don't play on your blindness. Don't use blindness to get extra help. Take full responsibility.*

> *Do not expect to be treated any differently except to accommodate the disability. Every employee has things they can and cannot do.*

> *Encourage professors to grade equally. Encourage the same quality as received from a sighted student. Don't allow the student to slack off because this will not be tolerated in the business world. Don't make exceptions in spelling, grammar, or speech. The student may need help in getting accommodations, but expect the same overall performance.*

One third of the employers encouraged job applicants to promote themselves in the interview. Job applicants should emphasize abilities and assets they bring to the company and downplay disabilities or lack of skills.

> *During the interview, sell the agency on what you can do and don't talk yourself out of a job.*

> *It is very important to present yourself and your documents well. Early in the job interview, let the employer know exactly what your needs are or tell them what you won't need; [that you are] self-sufficient.*

One fifth of the employers advised college students with visual impairments to choose the right job. Successful placements increase when job demands are

matched with individual abilities and skills.

Get into the right field!

> *Just because a person is blind, does not guarantee a job in a particular area. [For example,] you are not necessarily qualified to work with blind people just because you are blind.*

One fifth of the employers advised college students to discuss their need for accommodations. Employers wanted someone who knew how to obtain accommodations for themselves. Employers do not have time to learn about accommodations; they depend upon job applicants or employees to solve these problems themselves.

> *Ask for accommodations early so that productivity won't be hurt. Be prepared to represent how they do the job to convince the interviewer they could do it. Be able to demonstrate that the disability will not affect the job performance. A lot of sighted people take things for granted and don't realize that things can be done differently. Show them or tell them how things can be done with a disability. Be prepared to offer [the employer] specific names and addresses for accommodations.*

> *Don't go into a situation expecting more accommodations than required by the law. Go in on your own merits. Any boss worth his salt will make needed accommodations.*

> *Make [your] own arrangements to provide peripherals to competitively perform on the job. This shows initiative and absolves the company from making changes. I wouldn't be able to provide [the] worker with all the needed equipment unless he brought in twice as much money. This may be discriminatory on my part. If they are expecting accommodations, they should spell them out in the interview.*

One tenth of the employers needed job applicants who could educate employers and coworkers about working with someone with a visual impairment. Employers appreciated employees who could teach others with grace and tact instead of sarcasm and accusations.

> *Be gentle with sighted coworkers. Don't presume that they are stupid because they don't understand your disability. They may not have been educated. Be able to handle stupid questions and educate them.*

> *Be able to discuss [your] needs with [your] employer. Most of us are dumb about blindness. The more information that person can give about [his or her] ability to do the job would make the employer [more] comfortable. Most people don't want to discriminate. We just need to*

know you can do the job. Educate all of us [about] what a visually impaired person can and cannot do.

Learn how to make sighted people comfortable with your disability. Don't be embarrassed to express your needs. Get people to verbalize what they're writing on the chart board. Tell them how to help you and how to make materials accessible.

Two employers advocated the merits of networking when looking for jobs. They advised applicants to talk to anyone and everyone during the job hunt, "Talk to whoever can help you, even those who might be helping high school graduates as their primary emphasis".

Finally, 4 employers offered other bits of advice that could not be neatly grouped anywhere else. In general, these statements are descriptors of the ideal employee.

Get involved in a lot of activities in college. [This] shows he's outgoing, willing to try a lot of things, and can do more than just study. If you can make good grades and have a lot of activities, you would be considered a more outgoing, well-rounded worker. You would have more activities to put on your resume.

[I'd give the] same advice [as] given to any student - employers are looking for initiative. Develop interrelationship skills. Be able to negotiate with coworkers to get the job done as a team. Develop team working skills and communication skills. People who take initiative, work in teams, and communicate well are problem-solvers.

Advice to job applicants. Employers were next asked, "What advice would you give to someone who is blind and wanted to work for your company?". This question moved the discussion from work in general, to work for a particular company. Almost one third of the employers (30%) stated an obvious concern: They needed employees prepared to perform on the job and capable of competing with other workers.

I would expect them to produce good work and to contribute to the group.

Be brutally honest about [your] limitations. Expect to compete equally with anyone else working here.

I had to be convinced that this person had the skills to compensate for the disability. [You must] recognize prejudices and stereotypes that any employer might have. Be prepared for questions that will come (e.g., "How can you complete the job? Will students cheat on the test?"). They will have a tougher job being convincing that they can do

the job. [Note: This was a principal talking about teachers.]

One quarter of the employers told potential job seekers to apply for jobs that interest them, "When there is a vacancy that interests you and you meet [the] minimum qualifications, put in an application immediately". Applying for more jobs increases the chances of obtaining any one job. Another 10% advised job seekers to apply for jobs because their companies were actively seeking employees with disabilities. Many companies relax their hiring requirements when a person with an impairment is being considered for a job.

> *Send in a resume! [This] company is very interested in diversity and has the resources to make [the] needed accommodations.*
>
> *Claim disability on the application for preference in hiring.*

One fifth of the employers believed job applicants should discuss needed accommodations with potential employers. Employers were not always familiar with accommodations, but were anxious to know how applicants with visual impairments could accomplish a task.

> *Be able to tell how they can do [the] job and where she [the employer] could get accommodations for that person.*
>
> *Make sure that they let us know what their needs are. We don't have mental telepathy.*
>
> *Under ADA, we have to make reasonable accommodations. They need to be independent and tell us what they need to [perform their] work.*

Two employers advised job applicants to prepare for the job by completing their education, obtaining work experience, and researching the company.

> *Hone your skills. Do well in school and prepare yourself for [your] chosen job. Related work experiences would help, even unpaid experiences.*
>
> *Understand what we [the company] do. Have knowledge about the profession. Come equipped with knowledge of the area.*

Advice to other employers. Finally, employers were asked, "What advice would you give to other employers about hiring a blind worker?". The most common response was to hire employees based on their skills (advice given by more than half of the respondents). Hiring decisions should be based on the ability to perform and not on pity, fear, or affirmative action requirements.

> *Don't hire out of pity, especially if jobs require sight.*
>
> *The worker can and cannot do certain things, so don't set up*

employees for failure. Don't try to force a match, just because you have to hire a disabled worker.

Take a proactive view. If this is the best person for the job, how can I adjust the job to take advantage of this person's skills and abilities? Modify the job. I don't believe there are many jobs that a visually impaired person can't do.

One quarter of the employers touted the superior qualities of people with visual impairments. While this may or may not be true, these employers believed that people with visual impairments have qualities and abilities beyond the abilities of sighted cohorts.

Lots of time, people have had to deal with tough issues and have something to offer because of overcoming that adversary. .

They are dependent and loyal. These are characteristics that cannot be matched.

Hire them! Don't be fooled - they are dedicated. There are less personnel issues involved in working with disabled individuals. Just for this one reason, employers should want to make accommodations and hire them.

As indicated by earlier responses, providing accommodations was an important issue for employers. Almost one fifth of the employers offered advice to other employers about accommodations.

Think about it and don't dismiss things out of hand. There are accommodations that are not usually monumental. Don't make assumptions, but ask the person themselves.

Once the person is hired, be fair in making accommodations so they can do the job.

Some of the procedures we used to accommodate this worker were very helpful to use with other nondisabled workers. Some accommodations are actually business advantages.

Four employers were initially concerned about hiring someone with a visual impairment. They offered reassurances to other employers that many concerns were unfounded once the employee was hired.

Don't hesitate to hire. Both experiences have been satisfactory. We were concerned about safety issues and transportation to work, but it has not been a problem.

I was concerned about my communication methods and body language and I found that this worked the same with my blind employees.

Comparison to Sighted Workers

Need to work harder. In previous surveys and studies, some people with visual impairments expressed the belief that they worked harder than sighted people to accomplish the same set of tasks. Employers were asked if they believed "that a blind person has to work harder than a sighted person to succeed on the job". Almost three fourths of the employers did not believe that employees with visual impairments had to work harder than sighted workers. Several explanations were offered by employers for their answers. First, some employers believed that workers with visual impairments worked harder initially, but not once they learned the job, "Yes, they initially have to work harder than a sighted person, but this diminishes over time". Other employers saw no difference themselves, but thought that workers believed they had to work harder. One employer stated, "I don't think they have to [work harder], but I believe that they believe they have to work harder".

Several employers emphasized the value of appropriate accommodations which allow employees with visual impairments to compete equally with other workers.

With proper accommodations, they don't have to work harder than a sighted person.

Assistance technology and training helps them to compete equally.

The last group of employers distinguished between working harder and working better. They believed that employees with visual impairments do not have to work better than sighted workers, but they do have to work harder to keep up.

Do they have to be more productive? No. Do they have to make more effort to be successful? Yes. [They] need more time to complete a task (e.g., read). They are held to the same productivity standards [as other workers].

[They] don't have to be better than a sighted person, however [they] do have to work harder (e.g., can't access paperwork as quickly). Their speed is dependent on the speed of the reader. [They] need to produce at the same level as a sighted person.

They may have to work smarter, but not harder.

This is factory work. The visually impaired person must be able to produce the same as a sighted person. [They] may have to work

harder to produce that same number. An employer wants someone to maintain the same productivity as the person who was replaced. [Employers] don't want people to skip breaks and take work home.

Other qualifications needed to succeed on the job. In a follow-up question, employers were asked if they could identify other qualifications or characteristics that a person with a visual impairment must have to a greater extent than a sighted person to succeed on the job. One third of the employers did not believe that anything else was needed to succeed on the job. The remaining answers were clustered into six categories. The first category included confidence and assertiveness and was cited by less than one third of the employers.

[They] must be assertive, so they're not left in the dust.

Assert yourself in a nonhostile way. Persuade and advocate your rights.

Overcome any tendency to be shy or introverted.

More than one fifth of the employers believed that employees with visual impairments must have superior communication skills in order to succeed on the job.

[They must have] better communication skills. Unfortunately they don't have good communication skills. They don't ask enough questions. They don't provide feedback.

[They must] be good at verbal, visual, and written communication. [They] must have [the] ability to comprehend and to express ideas.

The same number of employers identified tolerance and patience as qualities necessary for success for workers with visual impairments.

[They must have a] thick skin; don't respond to unintentional slights.

Most of us treat her as a normal person. Sometimes I forget she is visually impaired. I know she gets frustrated with the lack of tools to do her job. When I forget she is visually impaired and ask her to do something that she cannot, she must let me know.

The importance of organizational skills was cited by 4 employers.

[It is] more important to be organized.

Be familiar with their surroundings and know where things are located in the workplace.

[They must have a] better memory and [the] ability to recognize voices.

Two employers appreciated the problem-solving abilities of their workers with visual impairments.

> *Be a problem-solver. Don't make the employer responsible for your problems and accommodations.*

> *If you have a way of making the job easier or providing an accommodation, then tell your supervisor. Don't assume that because you have required so many changes and accommodations so far that the supervisor does not want to hear your suggestions now. These characteristics are good for any employee, but are especially helpful when the blind person possesses these characteristics.*

Finally, 2 employers believed that employees with visual impairments must be more flexible than sighted workers.

> *Must be more flexible and accommodating (e.g., transportation schedules, training requirements).*

> *It helps if they are flexible, have a sense of humor, and [will] speak your feelings at least to your supervisor.*

Repeat Hires

In the very last question, employers were asked, "If there were any job openings in your company, would your business be willing to hire another blind person who met the qualifications for the job?". Every employer, but one, replied unequivocally, that they would be willing to hire another person with a visual impairment. The lone dissenting vote "did not know".

Summary

Results from the Employee Survey

The respondents in this study were successful college students (3.1 GPA) who were very active outside the classroom. They had been involved in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and paid employment before and during college. Most respondents believed that college provided them with adequate training for their current work. Most used computers in their daily jobs, but appeared to have received their computer training during college rather than on the job.

Although one third of the respondents located their job within 1 month of college graduation, the average job hunt took 7 months. The majority received no assistance in finding a job, although most received help in writing a resume. Most respondents filled out job applications without any additional assistance. Disclosure of the visual impairment occurred early in the job search, either before or during the interview. Most, but not all, would handle disclosure in the same manner in the future.

Employees were asked which items were important to them in obtaining a job. From a list of 16 items, 5 stood out in importance: making a career choice, developing a resume, locating transportation, communicating with others about the type of job desired, and communicating with employers about needs associated with a visual impairment. Transportation issues were equally important to college students in the McBroom et al. (1994) study (none of the other items could be compared across these two studies).

Employees were also presented a list of problem areas and asked to identify those that had been problems for them. Employees targeted 9 out of 25 problems: locating transportation, having enough money, accessing books and written materials, accessing diagrams and charts, being discriminated against because of a visual impairment, accessing computers, managing time, participating in recreational or athletic activities, and being lonely. Transportation, money, computer access, and loneliness were similar problems for college students (McBroom et al., 1994). Every other problem area (except discrimination which was not asked in the college study) decreased in importance for the employees.

The employees did not realize how hard, stressful, or demanding work was in comparison to college. They indicated that they needed additional skills to improve their job performance. They also wanted to know more about accessibility, especially as it applied to computers and transportation. The respondents encouraged younger students to pursue their dreams despite their visual limitations; to understand their visual limitations and make informed decisions about their abilities; to prepare for work through study, networking, and skill development; to obtain appropriate accommodations; and to be on guard against discrimination. Transportation and accommodations continued to be problems in college and on the job. In many instances, accommodations were

needed to access both printed materials and computers.

Results from the Employer Survey

Most employers wanted to know about a visual impairment either before or during the interview. Employers actively trying to hire someone with a visual impairment wanted to know about the impairment as early as possible. Most employers were sensitive to providing reading materials in accessible formats, but needed time to create the materials. A few employers openly admitted their bias against someone with a visual impairment and opted for later disclosure.

The majority of employers wanted to be approached directly by the job applicant rather than through vocational rehabilitation. Most employers did not care how a job application was completed, as long as it was accurate. Sighted guides were not a problem for interviewers as long as they did not participate in the job interview (including sitting in the interview room). In contrast, interviewers evaluated job applicants more favorably when a dog guide was present. The majority of interviewers did not mind a lack of appropriate eye contact, if they knew about the visual impairment. Interviewers were not impressed when applicants made inappropriate eye contact without disclosing their visual impairment.

The most frequently provided work accommodations were travel instruction or orientation to the worksite, computer access devices or CCTVs, and alternative print media. The majority of employers reassigned some job duties, provided readers or transportation, allowed flex-time scheduling, and removed architectural barriers. The majority of employers also consulted with employees and state rehabilitation agencies for advice about providing accommodations. More than three fourths of the employers provided formal or informal training to other employees about working with someone with a visual impairment.

Employers advised potential workers to not expect special considerations for impairments, to obtain skills needed to perform the job, to emphasize abilities and assets during job interviews, to select jobs that match abilities and skills, to discuss accommodations and provide information about obtaining accommodations, and to educate employers and coworkers about the impairment. Employers also told potential job applicants to be prepared to perform on the job and compete with other workers, to apply for all jobs that match abilities, and to discuss accommodations with potential employers.

Employers advised other employers to make hiring decisions based on skills and not on pity, fear, or affirmative action requirements. Employers encouraged other employers to share information about the superior qualities possessed by employees with impairments. They also wanted other employers to know that most accommodations are not hard to provide. Only 1 employer was not willing to hire other qualified workers with visual impairments in the future.

Most employers did not believe that employees with visual impairments had to work harder than sighted workers, especially after the worker learned the job

and appropriate accommodations were provided. Employers believed that workers with visual impairments must be confident, assertive, possess superior communication skills, and be tolerant of others' shortcomings.

What do People with Visual Impairments Need to Know to Begin Work After Graduating from College?

Job applicants with visual impairments must possess the skills necessary to perform the job for which they are applying. They must be able to convince the employer that they can perform the job with a minimum of disruption and expense to the business. They must be responsible for themselves, including knowing how and when to self-advocate. They should know about vocational rehabilitation programs and other organizations that can support and advise them when necessary. They should realize that work is harder than college in many ways. Job applicants will be called upon to forget that they are visually impaired and to compete equally with other workers.

In Moving from College to Work, Are the Issues the Same as for Attending College?

Both college students and employees with visual impairments face obstacles in locating transportation, having enough money, obtaining access to computers, and dealing with loneliness. Both college students and employees have problems with accessing books and written materials, accessing diagrams and charts, managing time, and participating in recreational or athletic activities. These problems decrease in importance for employees. Employees also have problems with being discriminated against because of their visual impairment (a question that was not asked of college students).

Both college students and employees with visual impairments rank adequate transportation as a high priority. The following items are more important for college students than for employees: "Making arrangements for readers;" "visiting the job site" vs. "visiting college during orientation;" "making housing arrangements;" "receiving O&M instruction at work, community, or home" vs. "receiving O&M instruction on campus;" "learning how to manage money;" and "working with vocational rehabilitation services". These activities may become easier to perform as time passes. In addition, employees rank the following items as important in obtaining a job: make a career choice, develop a resume, communicate with others about the type of job desired, and communicate with employers about needs associated with a visual impairment. These last four items were not asked of college students.

What Skills and Knowledge do Employers Identify as Important for Their Employees with Visual Impairments?

Employers want to know about visual impairments as they affect job performance. They expect the employee to be able to either provide accommodations or to know how to obtain accommodations. Employees will not be given special considerations or favors because they are visually impaired; they must possess the skills and abilities to perform the job. Employers want employees who can talk openly about how they perform their job with a visual impairment; they do not need anyone who is angry or defensive about the way they complete a task.

A growing number of employers know about the legal protection available to job applicants and employees with disabilities. They are concerned about how they present themselves and their organization to someone with a visual impairment. Job applicants and employees must understand the law as it applies to them and their situation, must be able to self-advocate for their rights, and must know where to seek necessary help. Similarly, employers must understand the law and must locate resources to help them provide accommodations.

Checklist for Employment

The following list was developed from the literature review and from the results of the employee and employer surveys. The checklist is a guide for college students wanting to work, job applicants seeking employment, and all employees hoping to advance on the job. This employment checklist applies equally to people with visual impairments as well as those without any impairments.

1. Develop basic workskills and continue to improve performance and learn new skills.
2. Participate in work, volunteer activities, and extracurricular activities.
3. Develop role models and network with business associates, friends, neighbors, relatives, employment agencies, teachers, and counselors.
4. Know how to take care of yourself (hygiene and health, social interactions, money and time, telephone, cooking and housekeeping, and travel).
5. Utilize the resources offered by college career counseling services, college student support services, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and labor unions.
6. Practice interviewing and solicit critical feedback.
7. Learn about accommodations including cost and source, support services, government benefits, and relevant legislation and disability rights. Be able to obtain your own accommodations or tell the employer where to obtain an accommodation; do not rely on others for this.
8. Learn how to appropriately educate others about your visual impairment and how it affects your job performance; describe your abilities and not your

inabilities to perform a function. Keep a sense of humor and avoid becoming angry and defensive.

9. Dress and act appropriately for the interview. Dress and act appropriately once you obtain the job.
10. Use the minimum number of supports necessary for completing applications and traveling to the interview. Once you have obtained the job, continue to remain as independent as possible.
11. Develop a resume which supports your claims to the job. Ask a mentor to review the resume and provide critical feedback. Continue to update the resume.
12. Research the company so you will know what is expected of you. Use annual evaluations and other review periods to solicit evaluations of your performance.

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Appendices

Appendix A:
Contact Letter to Potential Respondents (Employees)

Mississippi State University

February 21, 1994

Dear Recently Employed College Graduate:

Your alma mater has suggested that you might participate in a research study about the transition of people with visual impairments from college to work. You have been identified as someone with a visual impairment who has recently graduated from college and is now employed. Your experiences as you began your job are very important to us. Other young people could benefit from your experiences.

This research is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). About 200 recently employed college graduates with visual impairments will be contacted by one of our trained telephone interviewers. The entire interview will last about 20 minutes and can be completed at your convenience. This is a confidential survey, which means that your name will never be linked with any of your answerers. You may also choose to not answer any or all of the questions and that is okay.

If you choose to participate in the study, simply complete the attached form and return it in the enclosed envelope. If you would like to call me at (601) 325-2001, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

We really need your help. If you have any hesitations, please call me. Your participation is very important because it could help increase the employment opportunities of college graduates with visual impairments.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Lynn W. McBroom, Ph.D.
Research Scientist II

REHABILITATION RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION
P. O. Drawer 6189 Mississippi State, MS 39762
(601) 325-2001 FAX: (601) 325-8989 TDD: (601) 325-8693

Yes, I would like to participate in the telephone interview about becoming employed after graduating from college.

Name: _____

Area Code &
Telephone Number: _____

City and State: _____

Best time to call: _____
Please include time zone.

A business reply envelope is provided for your convenience.

Appendix B:
Employee Questionnaire

SUBJECT NUMBER _____

INTERVIEWER _____

GENDER: 1 = MALE, 0 = FEMALE _____

INTERVIEW DATE _____

Hello. Is this the LAST NAME residence? May I speak to NAME OF RESPONDENT? This is YOUR NAME at the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. We are doing a nation-wide study on the transition from college to work for people with visual impairments. You previously returned a form in the mail which indicated your willingness to participate in this study. Thank you for your help. Is this a good time to talk?

The questions I need to ask will take about 20 minutes. The answers you give will be kept confidential. You may also refuse to answer any or all of the questions. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions.

First, I need a little information about your current job.

1. What is your current job title and what do you do in that job? _____

_____

_____

_____

2. How many hours a week do you work? 999 = DON'T KNOW _____

3. Do you work full-time (CODE = 0) or part-time (CODE = 1)?
3 = VARIES, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

4. Are you self-employed (CODE = 0) or work for someone else (CODE = 1)?
9 = DON'T KNOW _____

5. How satisfied are you with your current work? 9 = DON'T KNOW
Are you very satisfied (CODE = 1),
somewhat satisfied (CODE = 2),
equally satisfied and dissatisfied (CODE = 3),
somewhat dissatisfied (CODE = 4),
or very dissatisfied (CODE = 5)? _____

6. How long have you been employed since you graduated from college?
CODE NUMBER OF MONTHS, 99 = DON'T KNOW _____

7. Have you ever been promoted? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

8. How many jobs have you held since you graduated from college?
HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED 99 = DON'T KNOW _____

9. How long did it take you to locate your current job? CODE NUMBER OF MONTHS. 99 = DON'T KNOW _____

10. I am going to read a range of dollar amounts. Please tell me when I get to your total annual income. 9 = DON'T KNOW _____
1 = Less than $9,999
2 = $10,000 to 19,000
3 = $20,000 to 29,000
4 = $30,000 to 39,000
5 = $40,000 to 49,000
6 = More than $50,000

11. Did you receive any help or assistance in finding your current job? _____
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW

12. What kind of help or assistance did you receive? EXPLAIN. _____

_____

_____

13. If there was an application form, did anyone help you fill it out? _____
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 8 = NO FORM, 9 = DON'T KNOW

14. Did your employer know about your visual impairment before the first interview? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 8 = NO INTERVIEW OCCURRED 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

15. Would you have done anything differently about informing an employer about your visual impairment? 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

_____

_____

_____

16. Did you use a resume to obtain your current job? _____
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW

17. Did anyone help you or give you advice about writing your resume? _____
1 = YES, 0 = NO (SKIP TO Q. 19), 9 = DON'T KNOW

*** 18. Who helped you with your resume? JOB TITLE, NOT PERSON'S NAME. 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

_____

_____

19. How did you learn about your current job? CODE PREDOMINATE METHOD. 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

1 = Read an advertisement.
2 = From a teacher or college official.
3 = From a friend.
4 = Created or developed your own job.
5 = From a "head-hunter," that is, someone you paid to locate a job for you.
6 = Sent out resumes on your own.
7 = Vocational rehabilitation agency.

20. How important are the following in obtaining a job? Please give an answer from 0 to 4, with 0 being "not important" and 4 being "very important."
9 = DON'T KNOW OR DOESN'T APPLY.

a.	Making a career choice.	a_____
b.	Communicating with the employer about needs associated with your visual impairment.	b_____
c.	Making arrangements for readers.	c_____
d.	Visiting the job site.	d_____
e.	Making housing arrangements.	e_____
f.	Receiving orientation & mobility instruction at work.	f_____
g.	Receiving orientation & mobility instruction in the community.	g_____
h.	Receiving orientation & mobility instruction in your home.	h_____
i.	Working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor.	i_____
j.	Locating transportation.	j_____
k.	Learning how to manage your money.	k_____
l.	Participating in a job club.	l_____
m.	Attending workshops or classes to develop job-seeking skills.	m_____
n.	Communicating with other people about the type of job you would like to have.	n_____
o.	Developing a resume.	o_____
p.	Practicing being interviewed.	p_____
q.	Anything else. (SPECIFY) _____	q_____

_____

Now I need to know a little bit about your vision loss.

21. How old were you when your vision loss first occurred? CODE ACTUAL AGE. 0 = BIRTH, 99 = DON'T KNOW. _____

22. What is the name or diagnosis of your eye problem?
RECORD FIRST TWO MENTIONED. 999 = DON'T KNOW

_____ _____

_____ _____

23. What is your visual acuity for your right eye at best correction? _____

... for your left eye at best correction? _____

RECORD BEST VISION IN EITHER EYE. _____

9999 = DON'T KNOW
200 = 20/200 (CODE DENOMINATOR)
800 = COUNT FINGERS
1600 = HAND MOTION
2000 = LIGHT PERCEPTION
3000 = TOTALLY BLIND OR NO VISION - SKIP TO Q. 25.

*** 24. Which of the following most accurately describes your best corrected vision? 9 = DON'T KNOW _____
0 = No useable vision.
1 = Vision useful for travel.
2 = Vision useful for reading, but cannot drive.
3 = Good vision for all activities.

25. Do you have any health problems or disabilities? RECORD FIRST TWO MENTIONED. 0 = NONE, 999 = DON'T KNOW

_____ _____

_____ _____

26. How old were you on your last birthday? 99 = DON'T KNOW _____

27. What racial or ethnic group do you belong to? 9 = DON'T KNOW _____
1 = BLACK OR AFRICAN-AMERICAN
2 = HISPANIC OR LATINO
3 = AMERICAN INDIAN OR NATIVE AMERICAN
4 = WHITE OR CAUCASIAN
5 = ASIAN
6 = OTHER (SPECIFY) _____

28. Which of the following reading methods do you use?
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW

a.	Regular print.	a_____
b.	Regular print with assistive devices.	b_____
c.	Large print.	c_____
d.	Large print with assistive devices.	d_____
e.	Braille.	e_____
f.	Cassette or audiotapes.	f_____
g.	Readers.	g_____
h.	Computer with synthetic speech or voice output technology.	h_____
i.	Anything else. (SPECIFY) _____	i_____

_____

29. Do you use a computer at work? 1 = YES, 0 = NO (SKIP TO Q. 32), 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

*** 30. Did you receive training on the computer at work? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

*** 31. What adaptations do you use for your computer? 0 = NONE RECORD FIRST THREE MENTIONED. 9 = DON'T KNOW

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

32. What was your overall grade point average in high school? 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

33. What was your overall grade point average in college? 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

34. Were you involved in extracurricular activities during college? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

35. When did you graduate from college? CODE MONTH AND YEAR OF GRADUATION WITH HIGHEST DEGREE. 9999 = DON'T KNOW _____

36. What was the highest college degree you earned? 9 = DON'T KNOW _____
1 = DIDN'T GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE. SKIP TO Q. 40.
2 = ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE (2-YEAR DEGREE). GO TO Q. 37.
3 = BACHELOR'S DEGREE (4-YEAR DEGREE). SKIP TO Q. 38.
4 = MASTER'S DEGREE (MA OR MS). SKIP TO Q. 38.
5 = DOCTORAL DEGREE (PHD). SKIP TO Q. 38.

*** 37. How long did it take you to complete your associate's degree? 9 = DON'T KNOW. SKIP TO Q. 39. _____

*** 38. How long did it take you to complete your bachelor's degree? 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

*** 39. What was your major for the highest degree you earned while in college? 0 = NO MAJOR, 99 = DON'T KNOW _____

_____

40. Did your college education train you for the type of position you now have? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

41. Did you have any previous paid work experience before entering college? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

42. Did you work while you were attending college?
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

43. Did you ever volunteer during college?
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

44. Have you ever been a vocational rehabilitation client?
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW _____

45. Did you experience any of the following problems at work?
1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW OR DOESN'T APPLY.

a.	Accessing books and written materials.	a_____
b.	Accessing diagrams and charts.	b_____
c.	Accessing computers.	c_____
d.	Locating an assistive device that works for you.	d_____
e.	Managing money.	e_____
f.	Having enough money.	f_____
g.	Managing your time.	g_____
h.	Experiencing social pressures.	h_____
i.	Making friends.	i_____
j.	Being accepted.	j_____
k.	Living independently.	k_____
l.	Locating suitable housing.	l_____
m.	Being lonely.	m_____
n.	Finding your way around the worksite.	n_____
o.	Finding and scheduling readers.	o_____
p.	Dealing with employers.	p_____
q.	Dealing with other employees.	q_____
r.	Completing tasks with time limits.	r_____
s.	Writing reports.	s_____
t.	Receiving good evaluations about your work.	t_____
u.	Obtaining special services for your disability.	u_____
v.	Participating in recreational or athletic activities.	v_____
w.	Locating transportation.	w_____
x	Being discriminated against because of your visual impairment.	x_____
y.	Architectural barriers.	y_____
z.	Anything else. (EXPLAIN) _____	z_____

_____

46. What kind of transportation do you use to get to work?
KIND USED MOST OFTEN. 9 = DON'T KNOW _____
1 = PRIVATE AUTOMOBILE
2 = TAXI
3 = HANDILIFT OR SPECIALIZED VEHICLES FOR DISABLED PERSONS
4 = WALK
5 = BICYCLE
6 = BUS OR TRAM SYSTEM
7 = ANYTHING ELSE (SPECIFY) _____

_____

47. Do you use any of the following mobility aids? 1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 = DON'T KNOW

a.	Dog guide.	a_____
b.	White cane.	b_____
c.	Sighted guide.	c_____
d.	Low vision aid.	d_____
e.	Anything else. (SPECIFY) _____	e_____

_____

48. What do you know now about work that you wish you had known when you were attending college?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

49. What advice would you give to a high school or college student with a visual impairment about work?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

50. PROVIDED EMPLOYER CONTACT? _____
1 = YES, 0 = NO

One last important part of this research involves employers. We would like to contact your employer or your supervisor and ask him or her about adaptations used in the workplace. We would not ask questions about you or your work. If you gave us permission, we would first write to your employer and ask him or her if they would like to talk with us. Remember, this is the same procedure we used to get in touch with you. Would you be willing to provide us with the name and address of your employer or supervisor?

Thank you for helping us with this research project. Would you like to receive a copy of the study results? I'll need your name and address in order to mail the report to you. Would you prefer to receive the results in regular print or cassette tape? BRAILLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE.

RECORD IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON THIS SHEET OF PAPER ONLY.

Again, thank you for your help. Good-by.

Appendix C:
Contact Letter to Potential Respondents (Employers)

Mississippi State University

Date

Address

Dear *Employer's Name*:

Your employee, *name of employee*, has suggested that you might participate in a research study about the transition of people with visual impairments from college to work. We have talked with *name of employee* about *his/her* experiences as a college graduate with a visual impairment who is now employed. We would also like to talk with you about having recently hired someone with a disability. Your experiences are very important to us. The information that you have about hiring and training someone with a disability could provide useful information for other employers.

This research is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). Through NIDRR's support, we will talk to 100 recently employed college graduates with visual impairments and some of their employers. Each employer who agrees to be interviewed will be contacted by telephone for a 20 minute interview. The interview will include general questions about hiring and training someone with a disability. We will not ask you any questions about *name of employee* or *his/her* work. This is a confidential survey, which means that your name will never be linked with any of your answers nor with your employee's name. You may also refuse to answer any or all of the questions.

If you choose to participate in the study, simply complete the attached form and return it in the enclosed envelope. If you would like to call me at (601) 325-2001, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

As a business person, I know that you have a lot of demands on your time. I would not ask you for your time, unless I sincerely believed that the results of this research study would have a definite and positive impact on the employment of people with disabilities. If you have any hesitations, please call me. Your participation is very important because there are not many people like you who have recently hired a college graduate with a disability.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Lynn W. McBroom, Ph.D.
Research Scientist II

REHABILITATION RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION
P. O. Drawer 6189 Mississippi State, MS 39762
(601) 325-2001 FAX: (601) 325-8989 TDD: (601) 325-8693

Yes, I would like to participate in the telephone interview.

Name: _____

Area Code &
Telephone Number: _____

Best time to call: _____
Please include time zone.

Interviews will take place during the summer of 1994.

Appendix D:
Employer Questionnaire

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

This is Lynn McBroom at the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. I'm the one who wrote you earlier about being interviewed as an employer of a blind person. Is this a good time to talk?

The questions will take about 15 minutes to complete. You do not have to answer any or all of the questions. Your name or your employee's name will never be linked with your answers. In other words, this is a confidential survey.

I also want to make it very clear that I am not asking you questions about any particular employee or their performance. I will be asking general questions about hiring and working with any person who is legally blind. Also, throughout this survey, I will be referring to blind people. This includes anyone who is totally blind as well as someone who can still see some objects but is classified as being legally blind. OK? Let's start.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thank you for your help in answering these questions. Would you like to receive a copy of the study results? I'll need your name and address in order to mail the report to you. Would you prefer to receive the results in regular print or cassette tape?

Again, thank-you for your help. Good-by.

SUBJECT NUMBER ____

GENDER: 1 = MALE, 0 = FEMALE ____

INTERVIEW DATE ____

1 = YES, 0 = NO, 9 OR 99 = DON'T KNOW

1. First, I need a little information about your company. How many people does your company employ? **(includes management and part-time employees)** _____

2. Is this business classified as public **(1)**, private **(2)**, or private-nonprofit **(3)**? ____

3. What is the primary activity of your company, in other words, what does your company make or sell or produce?
   1 = Agriculture
   2 = Mining ____
   3 = Construction
   4 = Manufacturing
   5 = Transportation (communication, electric, gas, sanitation)
   6 = Wholesale trade
   7 = Retail trade
   8 = Finance, insurance, real estate
   9 = Services
   10 = Public administration

4. Is there anyone in your company who is a member of a union? ____

   4b. Did the union play any part in the hiring of a blind person?
   1 = Positive effect 2 = Negative effect ____

5. When a blind person applies for a job in your company, would you prefer to know about a visual disability...
   1 = Through an introductory letter
   2 = Before the interview ____
   3 = During the interview
   4 = Before the job offer
   5 = After the job offer
   6 = Does not matter

6. In a hiring situation, would you prefer to be approached directly **(1)** by a blind job applicant or indirectly **(2)** through a rehabilitation professional? **3 = Does not matter.** ____

7. Would you prefer a blind person to complete a job application by himself **(1)**, by using a reader **(2)**, by taking the form home and returning it at a later time **(3)**, or by another method? **4 = Does not matter.** ____

7b. What other method would you prefer?

8. How would you rate a blind person who received assistance in reading and filling out a job application? Would you rate that person much more favorably **(1)**, more favorably **(2)**, less favorably **(3)**, or much less favorably **(4)** than someone who had not received any assistance? ____

9. How would you rate a blind person who was accompanied by a sighted guide to the job interview? The sighted guide is not present during the actual job interview. Would you rate that person much more favorably **(1)**, more favorably **(2)**, less favorably **(3)**, or much less favorably **(4)** than someone who had not been accompanied to the job interview? ____

10. How would you rate a blind person who was accompanied by a sighted guide during the job interview? This time, the sighted guide is present during the actual job interview. Would you rate that person much more favorably **(1)**, more favorably **(2)**, less favorably **(3)**, or much less favorably **(4)** than someone who had not been accompanied during the job interview? ____

11. During an interview, how would you rate a blind person who did not make appropriate eye contact? Would you rate that person much more favorably **(1)**, more favorably **(2)**, less favorably **(3)**, or much less favorably **(4)** than someone who made appropriate eye contact? ____

12. How would you rate a blind person who brought a dog guide to the job interview? Would you rate that person much more favorably **(1)**, more favorably **(2)**, less favorably **(3)**, or much less favorably **(4)** than someone who had not brought a dog guide to the job interview? _____

13. Has your company ever hired a disabled person before now? _____

14. Has your company ever hired a blind person before now? _____

15. Which of the following accommodations have been provided in your workplace to help blind employees do their jobs?

a.	Removed architectural barriers	a._____
b.	Provided readers	b._____
c.	Purchased computer access devices or CCTV's	c._____
d.	Provided special travel instruction or orientation to the worksite	d._____
e.	Provided transportation	e._____
f.	Allowed extra breaks and rest periods	f._____
g.	Provided private office space	g._____
h.	Made print available in alternative formats (tape recording, braille, large print)	h._____
i.	Offered part-time employment	i._____
j.	Offered flex-time scheduling	j._____
k.	Reassigned some of the job duties	k._____

16. What else has been done to accommodate blind employees?

17. Who would you ask for advice in making accommodations for a blind employee?

18. Have you ever used vocational rehabilitation for the blind to help place a blind person in your business? ____

19. Have you ever used a private rehabilitation agency or firm to help place a blind person in your business? ____

20. When a blind person was hired to work in your company, were other employees given training and information about working with that person? ____

21. What advice would you give to a blind college student who wanted to work after graduating from college?

22. What advice would you give to someone who is blind and wanted to work for your company?

23. What advice would you give to other employers about hiring a blind worker?

24. We've talked to a number of blind people who believe that they need to do a job better than a sighted person in order to succeed in the workplace. As an employer, do you believe that a blind person has to work harder than a sighted person to succeed on the job? ____

25. Are there other qualifications or characteristics that a blind person must have to a greater extant than a sighted person in order to succeed on the job?

26. If there were any job openings in your company, would your business be willing to hire another blind person who met the qualifications for the job? _____

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